
1998

YEARBOOK OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



1998 YEARBOOK OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

CONTAINING REPORT FOR
THE SERVICE YEAR OF 1997

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**"EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF
JEHOVAH WILL BE SAVED."**

*This text at Romans 10:13 holds out hope for
people of all sorts. It also conveys a sense of
urgency. It is our timely yeartext for 1998.*

INDEX

- Highlights of reports from around the world 3
- Worldwide report for 1997 service year 31
- Acts of Jehovah's Witnesses in Modern Times:
 - Japan 67
 - Martinique 163
 - Paraguay 211
- A Letter From the Governing Body 253

1998 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES 1998 YEARBOOK REPORT

WITH a tone of great urgency, the prophet Joel foretold the coming of the day of Jehovah. And he identified the key to survival when he wrote: "It must occur that every-one who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe." —Joel 1:15; 2:1, 28-32.

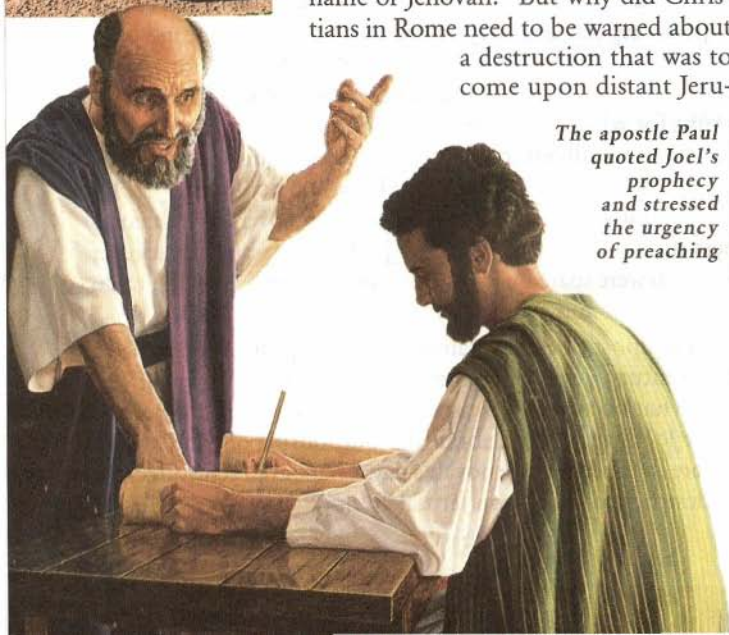
Such a day of Jehovah came upon Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. It was a time when Jehovah executed judgment. Years in advance he had warned the inhabitants of Judah and of Jerusalem that they faced serious accountability for treating him with disrespect. Oh, they knew his name and made use of it, but they did not sincerely inquire of Jehovah for direction. They did not really feel that Jehovah would call them to account for what they were doing. (Neh. 9:26; Zeph. 1:4-6, 12) For them to call out to Jehovah in the day of distress would be a mockery, and Jehovah said that he would not listen. (Jer. 11: 10, 11) But when Jerusalem was destroyed, lovers of righteousness such as Jeremiah, Baruch, Ebed-melech, and the sons of Jonadab were spared because they were earnestly seeking to do what is right and pleasing to God.

The apostle Peter explained that Joel's prophecy also had a first-century fulfillment. Directed by holy spirit, Peter showed that what occurred at Pentecost 33 C.E. was in fulfillment of what Joel had written about the outpouring of God's spirit before the coming of Jehovah's day. That day of Jehovah came in destructive fury upon Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (Acts 2:16-21)



However, about 14 years before that, the apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Rome and quoted from Joel 2:32. (Rom. 10:13) Why? To emphasize God's impartiality toward Jews and Greeks. As the prophet had written, salvation was available to "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah." But why did Christians in Rome need to be warned about a destruction that was to come upon distant Jeru-

*The apostle Paul
quoted Joel's
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of preaching*



salem? So that they would stay out of the danger zone. Any who went up to the Jewish Passover festival in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. were trapped when calamity came upon that city. But nearly four years before that, those who heeded God's word through his Son had cleared out of that doomed city.—Luke 21:20-22.

An even more far-reaching day of Jehovah now lies immediately before us. The execution of Jehovah's judgment will reach into every corner of the globe. But salvation is possible for everyone—no matter what his nationality, race, or language—who with full faith calls on the name of Jehovah and exercises faith in the sin-atoning sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. (Rev. 7:9, 10) Yet, Romans 10:14 asks: "How will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard?" Jehovah's Witnesses recognize the urgency of giving everyone that opportunity.

During the past service year, from September 1996 through August 1997, Jehovah's Witnesses gave an impressive witness concerning Jehovah, his Son, and the Messianic Kingdom. They reported public witnessing in 232 lands, island groups, and territories. The report shows that over a billion, actually 1,179,735,841, hours were devoted to this activity! On an average, 4,552,589 home Bible studies were conducted, and a new peak of 375,923 individuals got baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah.

This global witness is especially impressive when we realize who share in it. They come from all nations, all races—speaking hundreds of languages. Many struggle with serious economic problems, as do people of the world around them. Thousands are in lands torn by warfare. Many who faithfully witness are struggling with serious illnesses. Despite the traumatic events that have occurred in *Rwanda*, the Witnesses there, apart from the pioneers, are spending over 20 hours per month each, on an average, in the field service. During the turmoil in *Albania*, the publishers made it a point to do their witnessing early in the day when there was relative calm—before shooting would begin.

Each month worldwide there were, on an average, 5,353,078 who shared in the work of Kingdom proclamation. A new peak of 5,599,931 participated in the field ministry at some time during the year. This includes a vast army of pioneers—706,270, on an average, each month. This is more than ever before. What contributed to it?

Enthusiastic Response to a Special Invitation

Early in 1997 the call went out: “Wanted . . . Auxiliary Pioneers.” Through *Our Kingdom Ministry*, practical suggestions were offered as to how a person could schedule his time to do it. Warm encouragement was given to share during one or more of the months from March through May. Each branch set its own goal. For example, 100,000 for the *United States*, 20,000 for the *Philippines*, 10,000 for the *Republic of Korea*, 2,000 for *New Zealand*, 350 for *Liberia*.

What was the response? Marvelous evidence that Jehovah’s servants truly “offer themselves willingly,” as foretold at Psalm 110:3. During March, *Guadeloupe* exceeded its goal of auxiliary pioneers by 43 percent; *Ecuador*, by 73 percent. *Puerto Rico*, with 4,173, had more than double the anticipated number. In spite of difficult economic conditions in

Ukraine, when the call went out there for 5,000 auxiliary pioneers, 10,365 enrolled. In the *United States*, the combined figures for the three-month campaign showed 251,880 auxiliary pioneers; this represented 130 percent more than for the same period during the previous year.

Much added effort was put forth to share in this special campaign. What were the results? The branch in *Liberia* reported: “The field really began to move ahead with the special March campaign. It is a great sacrifice to serve as an auxiliary pioneer in this war-torn country, where some of our brothers and sisters have suffered the loss of all their material possessions as many as three times. For the majority, simply providing the family with one basic daily meal, perhaps consisting of a simple bowl of ‘palm oil and rice’ or ‘bulgur’ wheat, is the main preoccupation. It seemed unlikely that we would reach our goal of 350 auxiliary pioneers, which was about 25 percent of last year’s average publisher figure. However, trusting in Jehovah, our brothers responded well, and an outstanding all-time peak of 496 shared in the auxiliary pioneer work during March! With the 150 regular pioneers and 29 special pioneers, a full 42 percent of all the publishers reporting in March shared in some form of pioneer service!”

What about areas where the territory was already being covered every week or even more often? In a community near the branch in *Colombia*, a man told a pioneer: “I can’t believe it. When I went to get on the bus in Faca, they approached me. All day long they’ve found me—in the bus, everywhere. It’s now 8:00 p.m., and you’re still at it.” Why? Because Jehovah’s Witnesses want to help people get on the road to life. They also want to be free from the blood of those who reject that opportunity.—Ezek. 3:19; Acts 20:26, 27.

March was, of course, the month when the Memorial of Christ’s death was held. In what finer way could we show

appreciation for its meaning than by having an increased share in the work that God's Son entrusted to his followers!—Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8.

“Keep Doing This”

The death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ have had a powerful influence on the life of every true Christian. The apostle Paul wrote: “The love the Christ has compels us . . . He died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up.” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) On the last day of his life as a human, Jesus Christ instituted a memorial of his death. Each year his spirit-anointed followers were to commemorate his sacrificial death. On March 23, 1997, they did that in obedience to Jesus' command. (1 Cor. 11:25) Millions of others assembled with them as observers. The total attendance worldwide was 14,322,226, well over a million more than in 1996. What wonderful evidence of Jehovah's favor and blessing!

In many areas, Jehovah's Witnesses were truly zealous about inviting others to be present with them for the Memorial. In *Togo*, the 19 publishers in the village of Game Seva had the joy of seeing 820 attend. The 209 publishers making up the congregation in Aksu, *Kazakstan*, welcomed 1,080 for this special occasion. At Ekpe, *Benin*, the 56 publishers were surely amazed and pleased when 1,351 showed up for this event. A group of just four publishers located in Gbapa, *Liberia*, made repeated visits during March to remind people of the importance of the Memorial. As a result, 193 attended in that village.

Acting on Knowledge That Leads to Life

A vital part of the Christian ministry is the making of disciples. Before returning to heaven, Jesus commanded his followers to “make disciples of people of all the nations, baptiz-

ing them . . . , teaching them.” (Matt. 28:19, 20) In harmony with that, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide invite people to avail themselves of a free program of personal Bible instruction. This past year, on an average each month, 4,552,589 of such studies were being conducted.

Some of these were with people who were searching for the truth. A man in *Lebanon* found copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in the garbage. After reading them and noting the offer of a free home Bible study, he went looking for the Witnesses.

Others did not think they were interested. In *Vanuatu*, in the southwest Pacific, a son of a village chief who was learning the truth was angry that his parents had left the Presbyterian Church and were associating with Jehovah's Witnesses. However, one day a pioneer was able to talk to the son and offered to demonstrate a Bible study for him “just to try.” The brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* was used. After they had covered one subject, the young man wanted a second, and a third study. Soon he was studying twice a week and attending meetings.

Once they get a taste of it, quite a few people want to study several times a week. That was true of Lars, a man in *Denmark* who viewed himself as being an atheist. After he agreed to read the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* he quickly became convinced that there is a God. Then he was eager to learn more—so eager that soon he was having three studies each week in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. Three brothers took turns conducting the study.

Of course, merely having knowledge is not enough. A person needs to do God's will. The changes are sometimes drastic. The conduct of a young man in *Indonesia* had been so appalling that his Confucian parents had turned him over

to the authorities as incorrigible. But the sincerity and love shown to him when, at last, he went to the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses made him want to know Jehovah. After just two months of study, he made major changes in his life—no more smoking, no more drugs. Soon he became a publisher, then got baptized and became an auxiliary pioneer, next a regular pioneer—all in 15 months!

Truly, as foretold at Revelation 7:9, 10, "a great crowd" out of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues is coming forward to serve Jehovah.

Resourceful in Reaching People

When Jesus Christ carried out his ministry, he went where the people were. This took him to private homes. He also witnessed where fishermen cleaned their nets, at a village well, and in the temple in Jerusalem. (Matt. 13:1, 2; 26:55; Luke 5:1-3; John 4:5-26) The apostle Paul too preached publicly and went "from house to house" because that was the best way to be sure that no one was missed. (Acts 20:20) In imitation of this, Jehovah's Witnesses today go where the people are.

More witnessing is being done by telephone than ever before. This makes it possible for Witnesses to have regular contact with people who live in high-security apartments, locked buildings, and gated communities. The telephone is also used to reach inhabitants of the hundreds of small isolated cays that make up the *Bahamas*. The distance and the cost of reaching them have always been a formidable barrier. Now, however, regular "visits" are made via the telephone.

A publisher in the *Dominican Republic* enjoys witnessing at the airport. The publisher reports: "The airport territory is special. Without even owning a passport, I can speak to people of many nationalities. I present appealing articles that the travelers can take on board. I also approach those who are

bringing travelers to the airport or waiting for incoming passengers. I place about 30 magazines in an hour. Now the airport employees are waiting for me so that they may obtain the latest issues. I have started a Bible study with one of the employees." This past year the Witnesses in the Dominican Republic also opened a booth at the National Book Fair, which is a major event in that country. Fine conversations there led to several Bible studies.

The elders in a congregation in *Taiwan* arranged for qualified brothers and sisters to visit large hospitals in their territory. Two sisters visited the Dialysis Department. Their goal was to be friendly to the patients who have to be there for hours at a time. Have there been good results? As an example, when one man showed some interest, the sister brought her husband and introduced him. A study was started and is being conducted each week in the hospital. Soon the man began to attend congregation meetings regularly.

Some Witnesses in *Australia* made up a kit to offer to funeral directors. It contained the brochures *When Someone You Love Dies* and *Does God Really Care About Us?* as well as some tracts that are ideal for those who are mourning. These were well received. The brothers continue to make periodic visits to renew the supplies of brochures and tracts.

In many lands, the prison population has mushroomed. Where possible, Jehovah's Witnesses also preach to those in prison. About 15 years ago, Witnesses in São Paulo, *Brazil*, began to visit a prison complex that includes a house of detention with about 6,000 inmates. Forty-five regular Bible studies are being conducted there. Nine inmates are now Kingdom proclaimers, all of them having learned the truth in prison. When they get baptized, they enroll as auxiliary pioneers. Some of the inmates conduct weekly Bible studies with their own families, and one has classes teaching about 30 other

inmates to read and write. As a result, the prison authorities praise the work being done among the prisoners.

In *South Africa* two Witnesses called on magistrates, lawyers, and clerks in the court buildings. Here they met a marriage officer who asked: "Why didn't you come earlier?" She explained that she had already married more than 20 people that morning. She accepted the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*; so did the three couples sitting in her office. Now the brothers go three times a week and give a five-minute talk to an audience of 60 to 100 people. They explain Jehovah's view of marriage and mention that every Friday in the same court buildings more than 100 marriages end in divorce. They then offer the *Family Happiness* book to help these couples make a success of their marriages.

En route to a special assembly day, a member of the Bethel family in the *Philippines* traveled by long-distance bus. To occupy the minds of the passengers, the bus operators often use video players to run movies. But on this trip, our brother asked whether he could play a videotape that he had brought along. The conductor agreed. As a result, 70 passengers watched *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*. Indeed, there are many ways to let people hear the good news.

The Joy of Preaching in "Untouched Territory"

Like the apostle Paul, who took pleasure in preaching in areas where no witness had been given previously, some of Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses make themselves available to work "untouched territory" as well as areas where no witnessing has been done on a regular basis.—Rom. 15:23.

Large rural areas of *Moldova*, in Eastern Europe, are virtually virgin territory as far as preaching the good news is concerned. Yet, when given attention some of it proves to be

very fruitful. A congregation in Tighina worked two villages in such a territory in January 1997. Studies were quickly started, and at the summer district convention, 13 from those villages got baptized. What a cause for rejoicing!

A pioneer sister in Lima, *Peru*, wanted to expand her service by witnessing in an isolated area. She traveled 15 hours by bus to her hometown in the district of Andamarca. There were no Witnesses among the 7,000 people living in that area. To her amazement she quickly located a job. Her pioneer partner joined her. They found it surprisingly easy to witness to doctors, engineers, architects, and other professional people there. Some had genuine spiritual hunger. In just a couple of months, three of the congregation meetings were being held regularly, with 15 in attendance. For the Memorial, 66 attended.

A pioneer couple serving where the need is great in *Guyana* had excellent results even before reaching their territory. At an overnight stop, they preached to some of the local villagers. The following morning, before they could continue their trip, a young girl approached their tent and said that her mother wanted to speak to them. How surprised they were to find a woman who had been reading the Society's literature for 14 years! Her sister had been sending it to her from the United States. Its influence in the family's life had been so powerful that they had abandoned the Catholic Church, even enduring the ostracism of the community for doing so! The following Sunday a meeting was arranged. There were 47 present, including 23 members of the woman's family. Arrangements were later made to celebrate the Memorial there, and 66 were present. How abundant the blessings are for those who answer the call to 'step over into Macedonia to help'!—Acts 16:9.

Young Ones "Praise the Name of Jehovah"

It is encouraging to see many young ones among those who are zealously serving Jehovah. Psalm 148:7-13 invites: "Praise Jehovah from the earth, . . . you young men and also you virgins, you old men together with boys. Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for his name alone is unreachably high. His dignity is above earth and heaven." Many thousands are accepting that gracious invitation. They are seizing opportunities to give a fine witness both verbally and by their Christian conduct.

A survey of the publishers in *Ghana* showed that 12 percent of the more than 50,000 publishers were between 6 and 20 years of age. The branch in *Argentina* reports that half of the 3,441 baptized at their latest series of conventions were young folks, from 12 years up. Most of these young people are still going to school. They have access to a unique territory that others cannot readily reach. And it often proves to be fruitful territory.

Daniel, a six-year-old unbaptized publisher in *Ghana*, conducts ten Bible studies, mostly with school friends. One of them, a 19-year-old, attended the Memorial last March. When Daniel's teacher made a misleading statement in class about the origin of animal life, Daniel saw an opportunity. During the break period, he went to the teacher and politely told him that he had a publication that would throw more light on what they had been discussing. After the teacher read a brochure, he wrote a note to Daniel's father. That teacher is now progressing in the knowledge that leads to everlasting life.

Even preschoolers who have been instructed by God-fearing parents can have an effective part in giving a witness. In *Russia*, when a mother and her five-year-old daughter ride the subway, it is often the young one who starts conversations. If there is somebody sitting next to them, the girl asks: "Ex-

cuse me, Ma'am, do you know that God's name is Jehovah?" Usually the reply is, "No." Then the girl turns to her mother and says: "Mom, explain that to her, please."

Among our young folks are some very courageous and zealous Witnesses. Bjarki, now ten years old, has often preached to his schoolmates in *Iceland*. Recently they insisted that he was not a Christian because he believed in Jehovah, not in God, as they put it. When he tried to explain matters, they refused to believe him. On the way home from school, Bjarki asked one of the boys from his class to come home with him because he had something he needed to show him. There Bjarki opened his Bible to Genesis 2:5, where God's name appears in the footnote in the Icelandic Bible, and he also used the *New World Translation* in English to convince his friend that God's name is Jehovah. Then Bjarki said: "Now you have seen for yourself that according to the Bible, God's name is Jehovah, so when the boys in school say that Jehovah is not God's name, you can tell them that what they are saying is not right because you have seen it yourself in the Bible." So Bjarki not only taught his friend the truth but also gave him instructions on how to preach.

Sometimes it has been possible to give a tactful witness right in the classroom. A young brother in *Lebanon* gave a report regarding Jehovah's Witnesses to his classmates. In it he included a showing of the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*. When asked to write an essay about what she had done during the school's "Easter" holidays, a young publisher in *Portugal* included the fact that she had attended the Memorial. As a result of the interest that this sparked, her teacher soon agreed to have a Bible study and is now an unbaptized publisher.

The zeal of many young ones has moved them to enroll as auxiliary pioneers—some as regular pioneers. Marie Rose, in

Rwanda, is one of these. While attending secondary school, she works hard to help her elderly mother, but she is also a regular pioneer and is conducting 15 Bible studies. In *Cameroun*, Glory was an auxiliary pioneer while attending school, though none of her immediate family were Witnesses. Now she is a regular pioneer, and three others in her family have become baptized Witnesses. Glory says: "Pioneering while attending school proved to be the best way of protecting myself from the drugs, immorality, and violence that pervade many schools these days."

A School for Those Who Choose Pioneering

A special course of training is available to regular pioneers who have been on the list for at least a year. In November 1977, the first invitations to attend the Pioneer Service School were sent out in the United States. During the past 20 years, over 195,000 pioneers in the United States alone have benefited from this school. That includes the 10,345 students who attended during the past service year. Hundreds of thousands worldwide have received this training.

What is the objective of the school? The course is designed to help pioneers (1) walk with Jehovah in imitation of Jesus Christ, (2) abound more fully in love for the whole association of brothers, and (3) sharpen their preaching and teaching skills so as to shine more effectively "as illuminators in the world."—Phil. 2:15.

Two instructors said that in addition to the practical training for the field ministry, the course helped the students "to be balanced in the pioneer work and not to let the things of this system cause them to lose focus." As a result, more have been helped to pursue the full-time ministry as a satisfying career.

During the past eight years, when bans on the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Eastern Europe and Africa were lift-

ed, arrangements were quickly made so that pioneers in these areas could benefit from the Pioneer Service School. *Slovenia* reports: "The positive effects of the school can be seen, as the quality and effectiveness of the individual pioneers are improving." Enthusiasm expressed by those who have attended the school often moves others to pioneer. Such was the case in *Hungary*, where a congregation with 5 pioneers gained 21 more after some had attended the Pioneer Service School.

The harvest is indeed great. There is a need for willing, well-trained ministers in the field. No doubt the Pioneer Service School will continue to help fill this need.

Ten Years of the Ministerial Training School

About ten years after the Pioneer Service School began, the Ministerial Training School was inaugurated, on October 1, 1987, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Single elders and ministerial servants who receive this schooling may be invited to serve wherever there is a need in the worldwide field. Ten years ago there were 54,911 congregations worldwide; today we have 85,256. There is a great need for qualified men to shepherd, teach, and take the lead in the great evangelizing work. The Ministerial Training School prepares dedicated men to fill those needs.—2 Tim. 2:2.

Since it started, 3,698 have attended the school in the Americas, 1,208 in Africa, 1,804 in Asia and the islands of the Pacific, and 2,295 in Europe. Graduates of this school now serve in 126 different lands.

Quite a number of graduates are multilingual. Such abilities are put to immediate use either in their own lands where there are many ethnic groups or in foreign fields. Others have learned languages of the countries to which they were sent.

Hundreds of graduates are in the special pioneer work, helping to open isolated areas. Congregations in need of elders and ministerial servants have benefited from their

services. Some are assigned to share in circuit work. *Nigeria*, for example, reports that 50 graduates are in the traveling work in that country. About the same number are serving in that capacity in *Mexico*, where many new congregations have been formed. In the *Philippines* 37 graduates are in the circuit work, and 111 serve as substitute circuit overseers. Some graduates who have technical skills have been assigned to fill needs in branch operations.

The school is proving to be a fine provision to give valuable training to brothers who are offering themselves willingly to serve the Kingdom interests. (Ps. 110:3) Because of their having been entrusted with greater responsibilities, more is demanded of them, yet their blessings are many.—Luke 12:48b.

“You Must Rejoice Before Jehovah”

In ancient Israel, worshipers of Jehovah gathered regularly for seasonal festivals. Those who went up to the annual Festival of Booths were commanded: “You must rejoice before Jehovah your God seven days.” (Lev. 23:40) Similarly in our day, the annual district conventions are a time for special rejoicing among Jehovah’s people. Early in the service year, “Messengers of Godly Peace” District Conventions were still being held in some lands.

What a fitting theme that was for a convention in war-torn *Liberia*! For weeks in advance, our brothers could be seen, in the towns and cities, proudly wearing their “Messengers of Godly Peace” badge cards. Jehovah’s Witnesses had every right to wear such a label of identification. The Liberian people know that during the years of war, it has been only Jehovah’s Witnesses who have proved to be true messengers of godly peace. While thousands of members of other religions joined armed factions and carried weapons of war, Jehovah’s people were seen everywhere, Bibles in hand, sharing messages of godly peace with war-weary Liberians.

By mid-1997 the “Faith in God’s Word” convention series was under way. Many expressed deep gratitude for the drama “Keep Your Eye Simple.” Others focused attention on the timeliness of the discourse “The Quality of Your Faith—Tested Now.” The brochure that was released—*A Book for All People*—has already been published in 58 languages. In *Poland* the high point of the convention came when the complete *New World Translation* in Polish was released simultaneously to enthusiastic audiences in Warsaw and Wrocław. In *Greece*, when the audience realized that the Greek edition of the entire *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* had been printed and was being released, then, even before the announcement was completed, a prolonged standing ovation broke forth accompanied by tears of joy and appreciation.

In addition to the district conventions, there were other outstanding assemblies in various places. One of these involved the dedication of the new branch, along with a 3,000-seat Assembly Hall and a Kingdom Hall, in the *Dominican Republic* in November 1996. Among those present were many who had lived through the ferocious ten-year persecution during the time of the dictator Trujillo. Ex-missionary Juanita Brandt related that missionaries had remained in the country, discreetly witnessing, doing some secular work, and encouraging the local Witnesses, many of whom were jailed and tortured. When he learned the truth, Luis Montás, a relative of dictator Trujillo, was treasurer of the political party. He was hunted, imprisoned, and at the point of death several times. But at 91 years of age, he was present for the dedication of the branch and was delighted to be among the 35,678 at the national assembly that followed.

Another outstanding meeting was held in March 1997 in connection with the expanded branch facilities in *Brazil*. At the dedication program, Witnesses from all 26 Brazilian states

were present. Additionally, there were delegates from 24 other lands and missionaries who represented 43 classes of Gilead School and who had served in Brazil. What a festive occasion it was! At a special meeting held the following day, Milton Henschel, a member of the Governing Body, spoke in Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro while crowds in four other cities also heard the program. Total attendance was over 200,000. His heartwarming theme, developed from Ecclesiastes 12, was "Jehovah Loves Young People." He urged youths, "Serve Jehovah fully, sharing in the pioneer service, before the calamitous days come."



Luis Montás, a longtime Witness

Later that month, an assembly in *Argentina* included the dedication of our own new 9,400-seat Convention Hall in Cañuelas. This facility will provide a place of meeting for district conventions and circuit assemblies for those living in and near the Argentine capital. Among other things, the dedication program included an enthralling account of the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina, where, in spite of a ban and other restrictions for 33 years, theocratic growth continued. The day after the dedication program, a meeting was held in the large River Plate Stadium in the city of Buenos Aires. The stadium was packed out, and brothers poured onto the playing field. A total of over 71,800 were in attendance. Some had traveled long distances. A crowded coach came 1,900 miles from Patagonia. Altogether, about 1,200 coaches arrived at the River Plate Stadium from various parts of the country.

Carey Barber, then 91 years of age and a member of the Governing Body, spoke on these occasions. At the dedica-



At River Plate Stadium, Carey Barber urged over 71,800 to resist the spirit of the world



tion he strongly urged regular Bible reading, saying: "Brothers and sisters, are we all reading the Bible daily? There are many who claim to be too busy to read the Bible daily; but they seem to have enough time to have three excellent meals a day, and that shows clearly, doesn't it? If they read the Bible daily, that will also show clearly, won't it?" The following day, at the stadium, when he spoke on "How to Resist the Spirit of This World," the speech was interrupted repeatedly by applause from the enthusiastic and attentive audience. When encouraging all to keep on progressing in what is good and just, he also showed that we need Jehovah's help, his spirit, in order to succeed. Brother Barber stressed the importance of "turning one's back on the dirty speech and immoral conduct of the world." Then he urged: "Find joy and happiness in serving, worshiping, and pleasing Jehovah." The effect of this special program on those present was truly impressive.

'Stretch out the Tent Cords'

In recent years there has been an amazing increase in the number of people worldwide who are going up to Jehovah's



| *New 9,400-seat Convention Hall in Cañuelas, Argentina*

great spiritual house to learn his ways and to walk in them. (Isa. 2:2-4) Within the past five years, 1,593,995 have submitted to water immersion in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. Kingdom Halls are needed in which they can meet for instruction and worship. Assembly Halls are needed to accommodate them for special assembly days, circuit assemblies, and district conventions. Branch offices and printeries are required in order to provide facilities where translation of Bible literature into local languages as well as printing can be done and where the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses can be coordinated so that everyone possible has opportunity to hear the Kingdom message. How appropriate, then, is the prophetic declaration: "Make the place of your tent more spacious. . . . Do not hold back. Lengthen out your tent cords, and make those tent pins of yours strong."—Isa. 54:2.

How are these facilities being provided? By means of Jehovah's blessing upon the united efforts of his Witnesses. Where possible, local Witnesses do the building and care for expenses through voluntary donations. Where needed—and this is frequently the case—help is given by Witnesses from other parts of the country or by the international brotherhood. At times, volunteers from five, ten, or more nations help out with the construction of major branch-facility projects.

Among the projects completed and dedicated during the

past service year were numerous Kingdom Halls, some Assembly Halls, and a number of branch facilities. These included building completely new branch facilities in the Dominican Republic, French Guiana, Jamaica, Madagascar, Mauritius, Russia, and Sierra Leone, also enlarging branch facilities in Argentina, Australia, and Brazil. What has taken place in these lands so that these facilities are needed?

ARGENTINA: Since the government ban on the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina was lifted in 1980, there has been an "explosion" in the number of Kingdom publishers in the country. In 1981 there were 38,869 active Witnesses—a ratio of 1 Witness to 717 of the population. There are now 116,151 publishers, and the ratio is 1 to 281. It has been necessary to enlarge the factory facilities several times. Recently, two more buildings were purchased and modernized, and the living quarters were expanded. All of this was added to the already extensive branch complex.

AUSTRALIA: Since the branch moved to its present location on the outskirts of Sydney, the number of Witnesses in the country has nearly doubled, to 60,946. New departments have been added: a Regional Engineering Office, a Hospital Information Services desk, a Legal Department, and others. The Shipping Department is now a literature warehouse for much of the Pacific region. To help fill the needs, three buildings—office, services, and residence—have been added to the Australia branch complex.

BRAZIL: Since the branch buildings in Cesário Lange were dedicated, in 1981, those facilities have been tripled in size. Why? Upwards of 338,600 more people have been added to the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil. They devoted more than 80,300,000 hours to preaching the good news this past year, distributed millions of pieces of Bible literature,

and conducted, on an average, 443,028 home Bible studies. The activities of 6,960 congregations and 340 traveling overseers are coordinated by this branch.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: This is a fruitful field. The 21,007 Kingdom publishers in the Dominican Republic are conducting 35,362 home Bible studies. The new branch facilities were urgently needed to care for the work there.

FRENCH GUIANA: There was a time when the preaching done here was largely by Witnesses who came from Guadeloupe and Martinique. By 1990, there were 660 publishers reporting and a branch office was opened—with what result? Within five years the number of publishers doubled. Preaching of the good news is flourishing in this land that is largely covered by the Amazon rain forest. There is now 1 Witness here to every 100 of the population. The fact that 2,167 Bible studies are being conducted by 1,468 publishers and 5,506 attended the Memorial in 1997 points to further growth.

JAMAICA: The good news was first preached in Jamaica in 1897, so the dedication of the beautiful new branch facilities in 1997 coincided with the hundredth year of witnessing in this land. The complex of new buildings includes a new branch office/services building, a Bethel Home, an Assembly Hall, and a Kingdom Hall. These facilities will undoubtedly contribute significantly to further theocratic expansion in the country.

MADAGASCAR: Much has been done in Madagascar since Jehovah's servants first visited there in 1925. In recent years the pace of activity has greatly accelerated. During March 1997, when 8,404 publishers were sharing in the field service and conducting 22,321 Bible studies, 45,300 attended the Memorial. The new branch complex will help to care for the needs of this growing crowd of worshippers of Jehovah.

MAURITIUS: An attractive new branch office and an open-sided Assembly Hall have been built on this island in the Indian Ocean. Why? Because here in the islands, people are responding to the Bible's appealing invitation to join in praising Jehovah. (Isa. 42:10) During the past eight years, the number of Witnesses has nearly doubled in this area.

SIERRA LEONE: Prolonged civil war and political turmoil in this land have made many people long for the security that only God's Kingdom can bring. Amid these conditions, construction of the new branch gave a fine witness. Building tradesmen from various lands volunteered their services without charge—unbelievable at first to the public. And the fact that fair-skinned foreigners shared in the physical labor along with Sierra Leonean Witnesses became the "talk of the town." It was evident that Jehovah's Witnesses have learned how to live and work in peace and true brotherhood.

RUSSIA: Dedication of the new branch facilities in Russia drew special international attention. Outstanding theocratic developments had taken place in this part of the world. On hand for the program on June 21, 1997, were people from 42 lands.

There were 10,000 Witnesses in the whole Soviet Union in 1972. In 1991, when the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was at last granted legal recognition there, 49,171 Witnesses were reporting in the Union's 15 republics. In May 1997 over 215,000 Witnesses were active in that area, and some 600,000 had attended the Memorial in March.

Russia and nine of those former republics come under the supervision of the Russia branch. In order to coordinate their activity and translate literature for them, new branch facilities have been built about 25 miles northwest of St. Petersburg, near the community of Solnechnoye. This was done in

accord with the legal registration of the Administrative Center of the Regional Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation. This beautiful complex includes seven residences that accommodate about 250, a Kingdom Hall and a dining room that seat over 500 each, and a spacious office and storage complex.

At the dedication program, Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body, gave the principal talk, "Building for the Future." Others related interesting historical developments. On large display boards in the reception area were photos and experiences documenting the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia for over 100 years. Viewers learned that as early as 1892, at the instance of the Orthodox metropolitan of Moscow, a man who told others what he had learned from the Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known) was sent into exile in what is now Kazakstan. They read about the hundreds of Russians who learned Bible truth from Jehovah's Witnesses when in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. They read experiences about the thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses who were exiled to Siberia and the Russian Far East in 1951, during the dictatorship of Stalin.

Among those present for the dedication were many who had endured long years in prison and Siberian labor camps for their faith. Can you imagine the utter amazement and joy of these old-timers as they toured the beautiful facilities located in this gardenlike, 17-acre setting? Tears filled many eyes, especially as brothers recognized ones they had not seen since prison days. What a joy it was to be present when brothers and sisters in the large courtyard spontaneously began singing in four-part harmony Kingdom songs that they had sung when they were exiles in Siberia decades earlier!

Many construction workers, from some 20 countries, had



- (1) Russia
- (2) Argentina
- (3) Sierra Leone
- (4) Australia

worked together for over four years to build these facilities. Some had given up their homes and had made radical changes in their lives to help their Russian brothers. What an emotional event the dedication was for them, as they prepared to move on to other theocratic assignments!

Altogether, there are 16,982 volunteers who regularly work at the Society's headquarters and branch facilities worldwide. Because of the circumstances under which they serve, these Bethel family members are all included in the Order of Special Full-Time Servants.

'Fields Ripe for Harvesting'

"Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting," Jesus said. (John 4:35) This is true in a greater sense now than ever before. Since 1919, when a campaign of global Kingdom witnessing was launched, vast amounts of "seed" have been planted in the world field. Billions of pieces of Bible literature have been distributed. Tens of billions of



(5) French Guiana
(6) Brazil
(7) Madagascar
(8) Dominican Republic



(9) Mauritius
(10) Jamaica



conversations have been had with people about Jehovah's purpose. Every appropriate means of publicity has been used to place before people the vital message of God's Kingdom as the only hope for humankind. Now is the time of harvest.

In Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean islands, 590,760 have been baptized in the past five years. And during the past year, 1,858,462 Bible studies, on an average, were being conducted in these areas with others who show a desire to know and serve Jehovah.

Africa and nearby islands report that since 1993, there are 274,724 who have become dedicated and baptized servants of Jehovah. At the Memorial in those lands, 2,863,594 were in attendance. In Malawi, there were over 125,000. In Angola, 160,414. In war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), 574,736. Surely, many more of these people will embrace true worship.

Since the Berlin Wall began to be demolished in 1989, there have been 309,589 who have learned the truth and been baptized in lands that made up the former Soviet bloc of nations. These are showing a willingness not only to be taught by Jehovah but also to do his will.

In North America and in Europe, where Jehovah's Witnesses have been preaching for well over a century, large immigrant populations are providing a fertile field for disciple making.

Indeed, when Jehovah's day arrives, "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe." (Joel 2:32) How vital it is, then, for us to help people now to know Jehovah, to trust him, and to conform their lives to his righteous standards! If they take such steps, when the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah does arrive, they may be among those whom Jehovah will look on with favor.—Zeph. 2:3.

WORLDWIDE REPORT: 1997 GRAND TOTALS

Watch Tower Branches: 104

Number of Lands Reporting: 232

Total Congregations: 85,256

Worldwide Memorial Attendance: 14,322,226

Memorial Partakers Worldwide: 8,795

Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service: 5,599,931

Average Publishers Preaching Each Month: 5,353,078

Percentage of Increase Over 1996: 3.6

Total Number Baptized: 375,923

Average Pioneer Publishers Each Month: 706,270

Total Hours Spent in Field: 1,179,735,841

Average Home Bible Studies Each Month: 4,552,589

During the 1997 service year, the Watch Tower Society spent \$63,914,602.00 in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments

1997 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF

Letter and number following each country's name indicates

Country or Territory	Population	1997 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub-lisher to:	1997 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1996
Alaska (A-27)	635,007	2,179	291	2,124	0
Albania (F-6)	3,262,000	1,090	2,993	994	31
American Samoa (N-26)	59,600	196	304	182	1
Andorra (F-4)	64,479	153	421	138	-1*
Angola (M-6)	12,262,000	34,337	357	31,497	16
Anguilla (O-31)	7,000	26	269	24	-8*
Antigua (P-32)	65,952	343	192	331	7
Argentina (P-36)	32,615,528	116,151	281	113,903	2
Aruba (R-29)	83,651	559	150	548	6
Australia (O-19)	18,426,900	60,946	302	59,892	-1*
Austria (E-5)	8,063,000	20,842	387	20,611	0
Azores (F-1)	243,190	587	414	557	0
Bahamas (H-35)	255,055	1,419	180	1,341	1
Bangladesh (H-14)	129,661,600	79	1,641,286	63	40
Barbados (Q-33)	253,000	2,243	113	2,183	2
Belarus (D-7)	10,163,000	1,962	5,180	1,806	29
Belau (K-19)	17,456	64	273	58	4
Belgium (D-4)	10,105,226	27,102	373	26,328	-1*
Belize (J-33)	216,500	1,292	168	1,100	5
Benin (K-4)	4,915,555	5,204	945	5,021	9
Bermuda (G-36)	62,569	445	141	409	0
Bolivia (N-36)	7,767,059	13,464	577	13,007	9
Bonaire (R-29)	14,218	68	209	62	3
Bosnia & Herzegovina (E-6)	3,500,000	796	4,397	725	25
Botswana (O-6)	1,533,392	1,098	1,397	1,022	14
Brazil (M-37)	159,279,120	459,522	347	435,032	6
Britain (D-3)	58,155,940	129,288	450	123,318	-1*
Bulgaria (F-6)	8,428,006	916	9,201	843	17
Burkina Faso (K-3)	10,352,000	861	12,023	770	8
Burundi (L-7)	6,500,000	2,273	2,860	1,614	0
Cambodia (K-15)	10,547,535	20	527,377	18	-5*
Cameroon (L-5)	14,044,000	26,042	539	25,014	6
Canada (C-31)	30,104,319	113,763	265	109,880	0
Cape Verde (J-1)	453,291	1,295	350	1,247	11
Cayman Islands (J-34)	32,000	110	291	101	5
Central Afr. Rep. (K-6)	3,691,900	2,086	1,770	2,063	5
Chad (J-6)	6,670,000	535	12,467	500	10
Chile (O-36)	14,622,354	55,679	263	51,495	4
Chuuk (K-21)	67,650	54	1,253	47	4
Colombia (L-35)	37,422,721	90,192	415	81,061	9
Comoros (M-9)	450,000	6	75,000	6	0
Congo, Dem. Rep. of (L-6)	48,000,000	104,134	461	89,346	-1*
Congo, Rep. of (L-5)	2,700,000	3,935	686	3,032	-9*
Cook Islands (O-26)	18,000	142	127	127	-7*
Costa Rica (K-34)	3,432,665	18,913	181	17,897	6
Côte d'Ivoire (K-3)	14,401,000	5,592	2,575	5,433	6
Croatia (E-5)	4,784,265	5,133	932	4,991	6
Cuba (H-34)	11,038,602	76,250	145	73,478	11

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

the country's location on maps following this chart.

1996 Av. Pubs.	1997 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
2,122	74	175	28	324,409	771	4,756
759	309	341	22	493,427	2,197	3,154
180	20	30	3	46,749	202	659
140	2	20	2	31,973	63	258
27,189	4,844	4,183	478	9,214,444	67,333	160,414
26		1	1	3,695	20	138
309	16	48	5	77,832	366	1,190
111,468	7,489	13,340	1,663	23,450,258	77,423	245,935
518	19	30	8	85,630	483	1,832
60,216	2,313	5,037	770	10,708,941	21,904	111,770
20,664	570	1,588	298	3,674,117	8,269	34,023
557	31	60	16	112,556	357	1,256
1,334	64	172	23	301,365	1,316	3,670
45	8	10	1	15,731	92	204
2,140	109	230	24	406,073	1,775	5,750
1,395	228	234	17	455,988	1,825	5,667
56	4	18	1	22,467	124	300
26,654	858	1,881	376	4,417,532	8,297	49,000
1,048	88	142	25	248,818	1,169	5,042
4,619	614	700	107	1,292,337	7,309	25,155
410	21	56	5	94,153	242	1,028
11,887	1,645	2,528	214	3,931,551	18,181	50,238
60	2	1	1	7,740	50	252
578	95	200	9	309,843	588	1,943
899	110	118	24	231,186	1,311	3,535
410,599	37,894	41,421	6,960	80,318,709	443,028	1,214,774
124,623	4,161	10,937	1,439	20,775,842	41,102	223,301
723	136	112	15	227,075	1,025	2,251
710	92	170	21	267,377	1,307	2,524
1,616	231	203	40	461,204	3,203	6,048
19	2	11	1	13,409	84	164
23,667	2,692	2,102	534	4,747,674	25,430	84,399
110,235	3,671	10,571	1,388	20,270,252	35,757	187,940
1,123	165	225	23	372,770	2,487	4,914
96	4	9	1	18,972	89	315
1,962	236	300	47	552,127	3,155	11,842
454	79	92	15	162,166	689	2,982
49,587	3,977	7,319	591	12,358,929	52,520	143,897
45	1	14	3	21,083	161	482
74,108	9,205	10,147	989	18,796,511	123,001	333,263
6	1			1,004	8	26
90,063	7,034	13,699	2,492	25,039,602	217,480	574,736
3,331	352	577	112	1,064,782	11,648	20,144
137	13	15	3	26,146	136	429
16,943	1,230	1,747	237	3,346,934	17,149	51,413
5,128	508	989	140	1,632,843	9,334	20,092
4,716	343	642	66	1,182,036	2,180	9,790
66,006	8,605	14,653	1,100	17,883,619	137,489	164,565

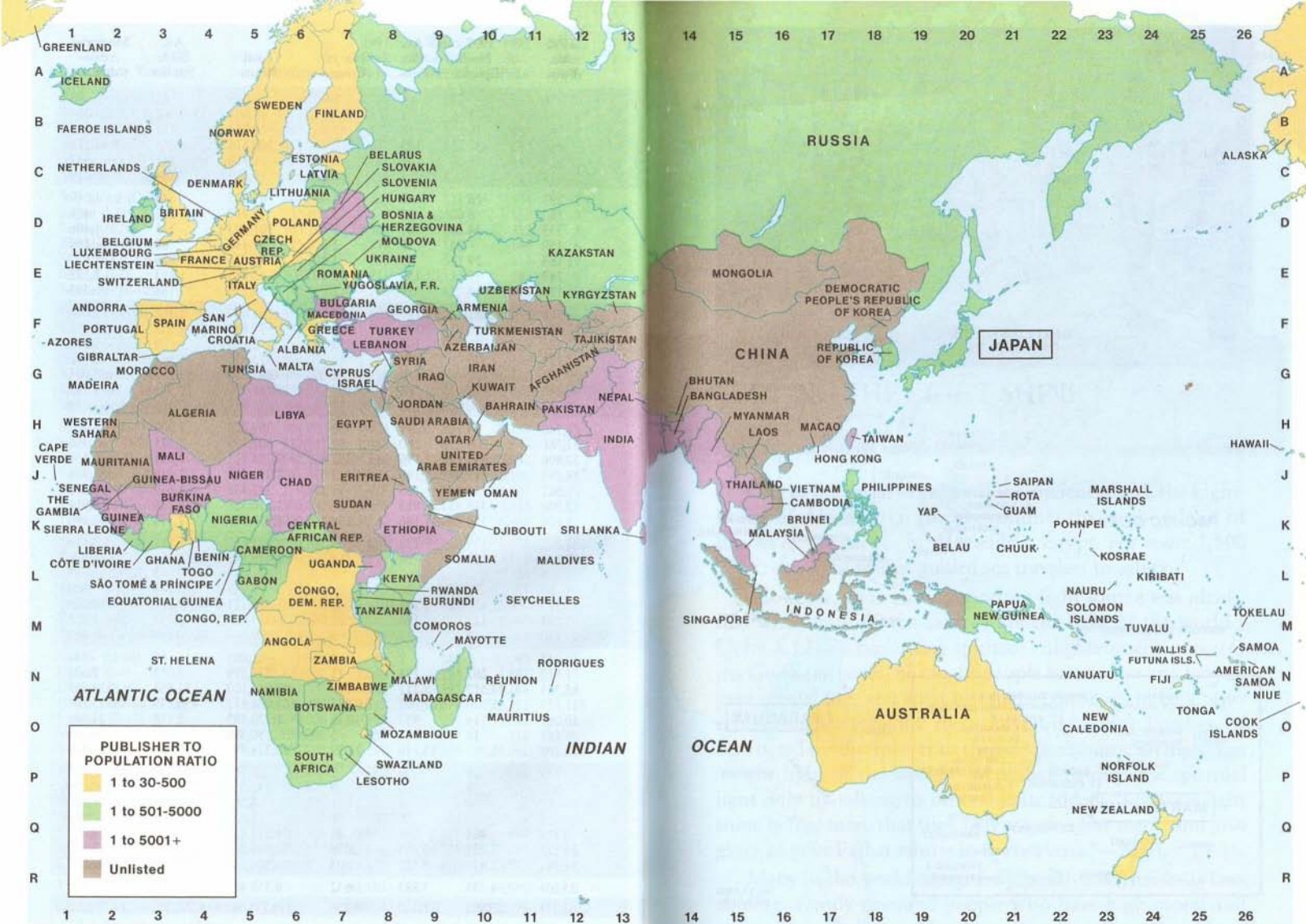
Country or Territory	Population	1997 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1997 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1996	1996 Av. Pubs.	1997 No. Bptd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Curaçao (R-29)	151,448	1,555	97	1,539	-1*	1,553	62	120	20	253,355	1,476	4,232
Cyprus (G-8)	651,800	1,749	373	1,730	2	1,693	77	236	19	383,122	901	3,339
Czech Republic (D-5)	10,304,000	16,537	623	16,318	1	16,209	722	925	246	2,403,717	7,171	32,965
Denmark (C-5)	5,251,027	15,491	339	15,155	-1*	15,351	285	1,021	222	2,220,797	4,126	23,675
Dominica (P-32)	71,794	346	207	330	2	322	16	42	6	87,512	429	905
Dominican Rep. (O-29)	7,293,390	21,007	347	20,120	8	18,678	1,767	3,966	320	5,852,173	35,362	81,237
Ecuador (L-35)	11,936,858	36,208	330	33,642	9	30,975	2,911	5,683	493	8,899,854	48,710	138,806
El Salvador (J-33)	5,908,460	26,010	227	24,497	4	23,446	2,083	2,579	439	5,224,439	23,456	73,157
Equatorial Guinea (L-5)	406,151	485	837	423	29	327	83	61	4	126,720	1,310	2,049
Estonia (C-7)	1,462,130	3,591	407	3,351	14	2,947	388	443	40	795,698	3,249	8,871
Ethiopia (K-8)	55,000,000	5,649	9,736	5,292	5*	5,036	548	916	79	1,570,141	3,674	15,716
Faeroe Islands (B-3)	43,784	80	547	75	-7*	81	2	24	4	22,267	45	110
Falkland Islands (R-37)	2,221	9	247	8	-20*	10		1	1	1,052	5	15
Fiji (N-25)	796,000	1,873	425	1,708	12	1,522	140	241	30	399,192	1,771	6,323
Finland (B-7)	5,116,826	19,441	263	19,191	0	19,134	580	1,914	304	3,143,009	7,414	28,812
France (E-4)	58,500,000	124,860	469	120,490	-2*	123,208	3,928	7,708	1,685	19,067,704	36,197	220,467
French Guiana (L-38)	147,283	1,468	100	1,440	4	1,380	111	201	20	369,748	2,167	5,506
Gabon (L-5)	1,014,976	1,821	557	1,725	12	1,546	169	206	27	416,286	4,186	7,951
Gambia, The (K-2)	1,150,000	84	13,690	72	26	57	15	13	1	24,106	108	250
Germany (D-5)	82,012,162	169,988	482	166,780	0	166,468	5,807	10,856	2,052	26,973,779	67,168	286,126
Ghana (K-3)	18,803,990	54,234	347	51,133	7	47,705	4,179	5,827	847	11,378,405	108,720	197,055
Gibraltar (G-3)	27,086	117	232	103	-6*	110		8	2	17,584	30	158
Greece (F-6)	10,259,900	26,980	380	26,704	1	26,352	773	2,897	428	5,064,346	9,406	44,426
Greenland (B-38)	55,971	158	354	153	1	151	7	33	7	42,600	120	345
Grenada (Q-32)	91,150	605	151	583	4	562	19	76	7	129,317	607	1,662
Guadeloupe (P-32)	410,000	7,886	52	7,584	2	7,458	361	432	96	1,166,479	6,581	18,605
Guam (K-20)	150,000	621	242	584	7	544	37	127	9	173,134	748	1,833
Guatemala (J-33)	9,056,000	17,304	523	16,738	7	15,666	1,595	1,822	253	3,525,002	16,382	55,973
Guinea (K-2)	6,756,800	824	8,200	805	11	725	100	168	21	277,212	1,550	3,769
Guinea-Bissau (K-2)	1,200,000	63	19,048	56	17	48	11	25	1	36,724	259	407
Guyana (K-37)	777,468	2,048	380	1,898	-1*	1,925	134	252	36	399,413	2,082	8,455
Haiti (O-28)	7,300,000	10,621	687	10,248	4	9,851	769	1,409	207	2,495,750	14,281	67,259
Hawaii (J-26)	1,183,723	7,650	155	7,389	0	7,392	313	1,167	93	1,703,725	4,824	17,476
Honduras (J-34)	5,900,004	10,532	560	9,696	11	8,705	1,160	1,226	145	2,363,724	12,858	38,534
Hong Kong (H-17)	6,502,100	4,145	1,569	4,035	8	3,743	350	827	38	1,249,571	3,884	7,704
Hungary (E-6)	10,174,442	19,457	523	18,387	6	17,342	1,914	1,598	234	3,480,493	11,788	41,922
Iceland (A-1)	269,735	324	833	314	2	309	11	28	8	56,938	173	624
India (H-13)	998,012,000	17,534	56,919	17,183	8	15,970	1,636	1,825	485	3,339,309	12,435	44,634
Ireland (D-2)	5,289,387	4,537	1,166	4,454	1	4,412	172	646	114	1,093,280	1,848	8,093
Israel (G-8)	7,910,600	826	9,577	775	20	647	84	79	10	175,348	772	1,833
Italy (E-5)	57,282,824	224,726	255	220,945	2	216,231	9,509	30,378	3,003	52,176,423	83,699	413,914
Jamaica (J-35)	2,502,030	10,614	236	10,034	2	9,800	674	1,076	183	1,853,124	10,038	32,903
Japan (F-20)	125,257,061	220,663	568	217,970	4	210,290	10,962	89,513	3,771	99,600,126	197,570	376,853
Kazakhstan (E-12)	17,027,000	10,585	1,609	9,808	25	7,848	2,718	967	81	2,188,939	9,891	29,710
Kenya (L-8)	28,000,000	12,142	2,306	11,445	11	10,285	1,641	2,058	220	3,572,443	15,148	35,236
Kiribati (L-24)	79,653	83	960	68	15	60	19	15	1	23,833	182	239
Korea, Republic of (G-18)	45,991,257	84,543	544	83,273	2	81,537	4,543	29,354	1,512	34,263,864	57,118	133,362
Kosrae (K-23)	8,707	25	348	17	-19*	21	2	2	1	2,911	27	141
Latvia (C-6)	2,500,000	1,681	1,487	1,463	26	1,157	281	195	18	372,706	1,597	3,956
Lebanon (G-8)	3,776,317	3,600	1,049	3,494	2	3,433	153	291	70	639,082	1,864	6,846
Lesotho (O-7)	2,112,500	2,354	897	2,149	5	2,038	221	356	53	595,622	2,371	6,848
Liberia (K-2)	2,500,000	1,961	1,275	1,648	16	1,419	244	359	39	619,466	4,486	10,376

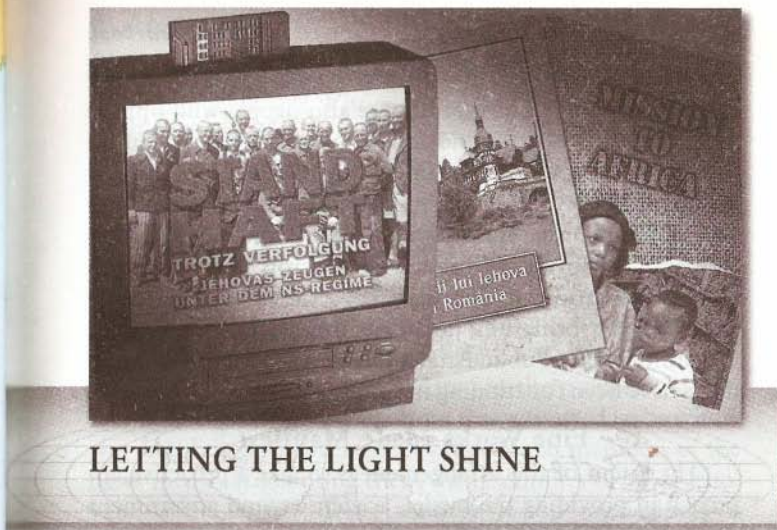
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Libya (H-6)	4,899,000	17	288,176	6	0	6				686	5	19
Liechtenstein (E-5)	31,143	60	519	53	-9*	58		2	1	7,616	20	115
Lithuania (C-6)	3,717,700	2,306	1,612	2,022	14	1,770	334	218	14	463,005	1,762	6,808
Luxembourg (E-4)	487,000	1,893	257	1,853	1	1,840	72	147	33	332,523	859	3,648
Macao (H-17)	470,000	122	3,852	116	12	104	5	28	2	38,489	112	280
Macedonia (F-6)	1,936,877	808	2,397	750	19	629	144	91	13	189,872	614	2,605
Madagascar (N-9)	13,670,500	8,655	1,579	8,307	13	7,339	1,461	1,437	157	2,304,440	20,165	45,300
Madeira (G-1)	258,536	1,039	249	978	5	934	60	78	14	168,549	632	2,066
Malawi (N-8)	11,018,944	40,924	269	39,779	11	35,765	7,915	5,447	584	10,020,174	29,236	125,415
Malaysia (L-15)	21,665,500	1,895	11,433	1,827	6	1,725	153	293	40	485,515	2,461	4,846
Mali (J-3)	11,300,000	178	63,483	159	5	151	9	61	6	90,644	422	710
Malta (G-5)	360,000	533	675	511	2	502	13	58	6	96,324	170	823
Marshall Islands (K-23)	50,345	224	225	189	6	179	14	43	4	67,201	581	1,130
Martinique (Q-32)	359,570	4,001	90	3,922	2	3,861	98	391	46	791,085	3,219	9,357
Mauritius (N-11)	1,082,972	1,278	847	1,254	2	1,231	121	86	19	213,137	988	3,102
Mayotte (N-9)	131,320	54	2,432	49	9	45	5	9	1	16,105	72	144
Mexico (H-32)	93,873,720	488,264	192	479,247	5	458,059	36,913	60,863	11,099	105,057,709	563,681	1,601,817
Moldova (E-7)	4,320,000	14,415	300	13,481	18	11,439	1,671	870	128	1,891,287	7,898	39,761
Montserrat (P-32)	4,000	23	174	20	-31*	29	1	2	1	3,659	11	85
Mozambique (O-8)	18,496,363	25,667	721	23,460	15	20,486	3,113	4,487	576	6,955,377	32,560	103,423
Myanmar (J-14)	46,000,000	2,470	18,623	2,352	4	2,253	96	296	99	533,680	1,660	6,325
Namibia (N-5)	1,683,518	926	1,818	817	-1*	823	43	73	19	169,234	813	2,681
Nauru (L-23)	6,560	9	729	7	17	6		1	1	1,538	17	83
Nepal (H-13)	22,901,600	287	79,797	262	20	218	59	48	3	75,909	429	1,001
Netherlands (D-4)	15,567,107	32,550	478	30,536	-1*	30,887	832	1,814	420	4,384,551	9,053	53,794
Nevis (P-32)	10,080	43	234	41	11	37		5	1	11,443	52	157
New Caledonia (O-23)	200,000	1,688	118	1,532	0	1,533	117	150	23	296,814	1,164	4,398
New Zealand (Q-24)	3,681,546	12,926	285	12,496	0	12,545	468	1,304	164	2,353,520	5,857	26,196
Nicaragua (K-34)	4,625,000	14,104	328	12,733	6	12,065	1,183	1,518	230	3,093,078	20,842	60,432
Niger (J-5)	7,490,000	241	31,079	225	1	222	38	46	7	77,058	409	1,187
Nigeria (K-4)	103,900,000	203,110	512	197,532	3	191,558	17,304	28,346	3,944	43,983,273	301,221	598,717
Niue (N-26)	2,076	32	65	29	-3*	30	1	1	1	3,694	23	96
Norfolk Island (P-23)	1,912	18	106	15	7	14		1	1	2,665	9	28
Norway (B-4)	4,404,149	9,921	444	9,449	-2*	9,600	221	535	174	1,230,895	2,682	16,597
Pakistan (H-12)	137,000,000	410	334,146	376	7	352	49	43	9	83,351	364	1,729
Panama (K-34)	2,718,686	9,338	291	8,651	4	8,289	524	1,220	187	2,062,979	10,237	28,185
Papua New Guinea (M-20)	4,411,060	3,256	1,355	2,944	0	2,950	230	347	55	656,321	2,946	15,020
Paraguay (O-37)	5,085,325	6,221	817	5,536	10	5,012	402	851	84	1,362,888	6,693	13,551
Peru (M-35)	24,371,043	59,291	411	54,019	6	51,063	5,335	10,830	679	16,266,560	69,466	193,440
Philippines (J-18)	70,000,000	126,211	555	122,727	3	119,709	9,624	21,325	3,491	26,308,192	85,650	388,130
Pohnpei (K-22)	38,522	70	550	65	-4*	68	1	17	1	19,313	145	599
Poland (D-6)	38,649,914	124,955	309	123,704	1	122,982	6,161	7,544	1,714	16,742,761	50,433	246,485
Portugal (F-2)	9,439,180	46,746	202	45,635	2	44,752	2,319	3,339	648	7,716,594	22,057	94,659
Puerto Rico (P-30)	3,755,000	26,404	142	25,589	1	25,397	1,194	2,541	326	4,759,256	15,530	61,451
Réunion (O-10)	675,700	2,760	245	2,701	4	2,601	189	227	33	508,134	1,654	5,827
Rodrigues (N-11)	34,678	38	913	35	0	35	4	3	1	7,737	25	85
Romania (E-6)	22,700,000	36,405	624	35,588	4	34,368	2,387	2,628	459	5,529,876	15,034	93,306
Rota (J-21)	2,524	10	252	9	29	7		3	1	3,979	14	39
Russia (B-17)	148,366,000	89,043	1,666	78,868	28	61,843	15,669	8,546	626	18,928,270	84,154	231,176
Rwanda (L-7)	7,828,000	5,073	1,543	4,679	32	3,539	1,160	1,095	69	1,968,714	12,226	20,121
Saba (P-31)	1,000	1	1,000	1	0	1		1		1,057	9	10

Country or Territory	Population	1997 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1997 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1996	1996 Av. Pubs.	1997 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
St. Eustatius (P-31)	1,500	18	83	17	6	16		4	1	4,579	22	55
St. Helena (N-3)	5,131	154	33	142	0	142	1	1	2	12,894	62	354
St. Kitts (P-32)	31,800	157	203	151	6	143	16	18	2	34,843	177	449
St. Lucia (Q-32)	151,300	677	223	649	1	640	37	123	9	180,416	884	1,775
St. Maarten (O-31)	24,000	261	92	242	12	217	26	36	3	61,118	347	932
St. Pierre & Miquelon (E-37)	6,300	15	420	13	0	13		1	1	1,309	4	19
St. Vincent (Q-32)	107,600	325	331	304	2	297	28	53	6	85,623	348	1,049
Saipan (J-21)	53,681	179	300	169	-8*	183	8	32	3	48,917	212	489
Samoa (N-26)	165,195	369	448	352	5	335	34	67	7	101,993	335	1,406
San Marino (E-5)	25,058	179	140	169	6	159		18	2	37,446	60	289
São Tomé & Príncipe (L-4)	124,206	229	542	217	19	183	29	45	3	76,031	556	837
Senegal (J-2)	8,700,000	826	10,533	794	6	749	79	150	19	262,985	1,223	2,272
Seychelles (L-10)	76,417	178	429	154	22	126	18	19	2	38,253	158	393
Sierra Leone (K-2)	4,510,000	863	5,226	750	-2*	768	91	141	21	231,679	1,364	3,616
Slovakia (E-6)	5,383,469	12,587	428	12,361	1	12,231	613	573	195	1,677,833	4,684	25,577
Slovenia (E-5)	1,986,448	1,839	1,080	1,786	3	1,740	82	191	33	392,188	658	3,201
Solomon Islands (M-22)	384,057	1,363	282	1,306	12	1,171	175	191	41	313,836	1,557	5,442
South Africa (P-6)	37,859,000	64,258	589	60,736	3	59,243	4,400	7,129	1,292	13,087,220	58,215	168,903
Spain (F-3)	39,652,742	106,071	374	98,724	-1*	99,240	3,240	11,184	1,287	21,141,179	29,505	166,842
Sri Lanka (K-13)	18,500,000	2,687	6,885	2,468	12	2,203	470	334	52	613,915	2,557	7,054
Suriname (K-37)	404,800	1,828	221	1,789	3	1,740	85	217	28	389,729	1,906	5,707
Swaziland (O-7)	937,747	1,987	472	1,843	4	1,766	205	280	69	502,599	2,373	5,976
Sweden (B-5)	8,847,578	24,246	365	23,692	-1*	23,896	651	2,196	362	3,794,911	7,953	39,431
Switzerland (E-4)	7,081,346	18,634	380	18,186	-1*	18,295	617	1,140	313	2,942,925	7,939	31,986
Tahiti# (N-27)	219,521	1,918	114	1,867	3	1,861	134	135	33	327,432	1,639	5,376
Taiwan (H-17)	21,300,000	3,475	6,129	3,325	11	2,996	319	913	52	1,270,528	4,206	8,911
Tanzania (M-8)	29,000,000	7,130	4,067	6,469	11	5,806	750	1,186	154	1,919,959	7,373	22,448
Thailand (J-15)	60,116,182	1,696	35,446	1,666	4	1,603	129	273	48	422,677	1,549	3,816
Togo (K-4)	4,269,500	10,221	418	9,861	7	9,174	1,070	1,404	153	2,458,441	23,351	45,936
Tokelau (M-26)	1,487	5	297	4	-20*	5			1	345	3	17
Tonga (O-25)	97,466	89	1,095	81	19	68	10	20	3	27,948	142	313
Trinidad & Tobago (R-32)	1,269,155	7,489	169	7,350	3	7,127	420	1,208	82	1,678,171	9,272	22,056
Turkey (F-8)	65,000,000	1,468	44,278	1,408	9	1,291	117	186	21	363,093	1,033	2,666
Turks & Caicos Isls. (N-28)	14,631	121	121	112	2	110	1	13	3	29,319	194	470
Tuvalu (M-24)	9,043	49	185	45	5	43	2	7	3	11,065	67	144
Uganda (L-8)	20,400,000	2,083	9,794	1,887	17	1,610	287	294	32	531,599	3,023	7,603
Ukraine (E-8)	50,893,500	85,242	597	78,264	20	65,385	13,612	7,217	710	15,943,103	52,556	224,988
U.S. of America (F-32)	266,776,000	974,719	274	929,471	1	921,123	45,220	107,792	10,883	182,994,613	455,239	2,135,167
Uruguay (P-37)	3,030,000	10,395	291	10,242	2	10,061	714	953	132	1,720,485	8,158	23,681
Vanuatu (N-23)	190,000	257	739	212	16	182	16	22	3	50,396	389	1,583
Venezuela (K-36)	23,700,000	80,172	296	75,261	6	71,298	6,887	13,246	1,079	20,374,997	97,969	282,448
Virgin Isls. (Brit.) (O-31)	17,000	147	116	139	0	139	22	18	2	28,786	137	590
Virgin Isls. (U.S.) (O-31)	101,800	643	158	600	2	587	18	84	9	130,011	569	2,005
Wallis & Futuna Isls. (N-25)	15,000	26	577	20	5	19	4	1	1	4,201	29	100
Yap (K-20)	10,759	30	359	28	0	28		9	1	12,133	66	204
Yugoslavia, F. R. (E-6)	10,566,745	3,883	2,721	3,699	11	3,329	481	589	48	1,043,416	2,299	9,012
Zambia (N-7)	9,780,133	96,686	101	87,747	4	84,772	5,281	10,953	2,058	18,387,500	110,960	428,697
Zimbabwe (N-7)	12,293,953	25,878	475	25,063	4	24,181	2,576	3,122	803	5,504,539	32,910	70,038
33 Other Lands		42,185		37,846	14.0	33,204	4,785	3,883	632	8,318,487	37,628	103,821
GRAND TOTAL (232 lands)		5,999,931		5,353,078	3.6	5,167,258	375,923	706,270	85,256	1,179,735,841	4,552,589	14,322,226

Includes Marquesas Islands

* Percentage of decrease





LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, stood prominently on the island of Pharos in the harbor of Alexandria, Egypt. For some 1,500 years, this light source guided sea travelers to safety.

However, a far more important light source was identified when Jesus Christ said: "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) By furnishing spiritual enlightenment concerning God's purposes, he taught people how to live and how to gain eternal life, and what he taught continues to be a powerful influence for good right down till our day. Further, he instructed his disciples as to their responsibility, saying: "You are the light of the world." Were they to dispense spiritual light only by talking to others? Jesus added: "Let your light shine before men, that they may *see your fine works* and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens."—Matt. 5:14-16.

Many in the world recognize Jehovah's Witnesses as law-abiding, family-oriented people who have high moral and

ethical standards and who are actively preaching the message of God's Word. However, there are also people who oppose our work and will stop at nothing to besmirch the reputation of Jehovah's people and to hinder our efforts to let the light shine. They do this by providing government officials and the media with inaccurate, lying, and disparaging information about Jehovah's Witnesses. In an effort to correct such misrepresentation, in February 1997 the Governing Body approved the formation, under the oversight of the Writing Committee, of a Public Affairs Office. General information desks have been functioning in the Society's branch offices.

Fine Works Made Manifest

The intent of this arrangement is to take a proactive approach in providing the media, academics, and government officials as well as the public at large with an accurate picture of our beliefs and activities. This is not an arrangement through which Jehovah's Witnesses boast about themselves. They honor Jehovah; and they do this, in part, by letting men see their fine works, which reflect Jehovah's high standards. —1 Cor. 1:31.

Because they follow Bible principles, Jehovah's people, individually and collectively, are an asset in the communities in which they live. The public activities of Jehovah's Witnesses involve more than our well-known house-to-house preaching work. When professional individuals and organizations become familiar with our fine works, they are more likely to have a positive attitude when they are contacted in the field ministry.

Disaster Relief

One way that we publicly demonstrate goodwill toward our neighbors is by our active involvement in relief efforts during times of disaster. For example, for people in the *Dem-*

ocratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), a team, all of whom are Jehovah's Witnesses, organized humanitarian aid in 1997. With the help of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses in *Belgium, France, and Switzerland*, refugees were supplied with tons of food, clothing, vitamin products, and medicine, as well as 18,500 pairs of shoes and 1,000 blankets, all of which was airlifted to Africa. The value of the supplies provided totaled nearly \$1 million (U.S.). These supplies were sent primarily as a gift to Jehovah's Witnesses, but they were also shared with others.—Gal. 6:10.

The *France* branch was assisted in the preparation of a brochure containing details about this activity. The brochure was distributed to government officials and members of the news media, acquainting them with examples of what Jehovah's Witnesses were doing in a positive and practical way to provide assistance to people in need. A number of officials expressed sincere appreciation for this information. They were impressed especially by what was done to ensure that the supplies would be received by those in need and would be distributed in an equitable manner.

Improving Family Life

The breakdown in family life puts a heavy load on government agencies and is of concern to public officials. Before the widespread distribution of the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*, a united effort was put forth by Jehovah's Witnesses in *Finland* to make personal contact with governors of administrative districts, mayors, municipal governors, social officers, and newspaper editors in order to explain what Jehovah's Witnesses are doing and how the book *The Secret of Family Happiness* could help families. As a result, some 120 newspapers wrote positive articles about the matter. Nearly all mayors and other officials accepted a copy of the book and promised to get acquainted with it.

In a city in *Lithuania* where there is just a small group of publishers, they too visited the city mayor in order to present him with a copy of the book and to explain our work. The mayor was impressed and asked the brothers if they had regular meetings in the city, since he felt that such information is important for the people. When they explained that they were few in number and did not have a hall, he encouraged them to start anyway. Because of such encouragement on the part of the mayor, the Witnesses began organizing regular meetings in Skuodas.

Facts About the Holocaust

In recent years the events connected with the Nazi era and the Holocaust have received renewed attention by public officials, historians, and teachers. Jehovah's Witnesses were one of the few groups that consistently spoke out against the atrocities that were carried out by Hitler's regime. The history of this stand has attracted the interest of the academic community. A study guide and a 28-minute classroom version of the video *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault* have been produced to assist educators in teaching about the events surrounding the Holocaust. These tools highlight the ethical and moral issues that such a tragedy raises. They will enable teachers to present to their students a positive example of a group that directly faced issues of peer pressure, intolerance, and conscience. Educators who teach classes ranging from middle school through university level have expressed a keen desire to have such material.

The *Stand Firm* video was premiered at the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp Memorial, located 40 miles north of Berlin, *Germany*. Government officials and dignitaries were present along with historians and survivors of the Nazi persecution. The premiere received positive publicity. Ninety-nine newspapers as well as two major radio stations carried

the story. The *Stand Firm* video is being shown in over 150 cities of Germany, and much public interest is being manifested.

In May 1997, in Moscow, *Russia*, two brothers participated in an international symposium of scholars on the subject of Holocaust education. They spoke about the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Nazi era, highlighting the fact that the Witnesses had been taught to view all humans impartially.—Acts 10:34, 35.

At another event, ten Witness survivors from Russia, Ukraine, and Germany attended a press conference and a premiere in Moscow for the Russian-language *Stand Firm* video. Two survivors of the Stutthof camp, one from Germany and the other from Ukraine, had kept in touch by letters since their release in May 1945. In Moscow they were reunited after 52 years! After the news conference, the reporters circulated among the brothers, taking pictures and recording interviews. The *Stand Firm* video was met with tears and sustained applause. The event captured the attention of the news media and the educational community. Russian journalists, who had generally been negative toward Jehovah's Witnesses in the past, said positive things about both our history and our work. One newspaper said: "Many were arrested, sent to concentration camps and executed. But human courage, supported by a belief in God, nevertheless showed itself to be stronger. It is a good thing that people were found to make this film and thus open up to the world a little-known page in the history of opposition to Nazism. We thank them."

Taking the Initiative

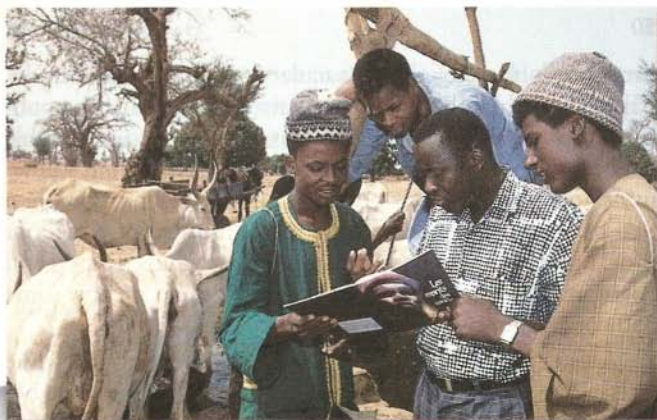
Responsible journalists will often report fairly and accurately if they receive cooperation and information. Thus,

when a religious mob attacked a Kingdom Hall in *Israel*, efforts were coordinated to notify the media of the incident. Newspapers and a television station covered the repair work that was done by 15 of Jehovah's Witnesses who were visiting on a cruise ship. This news coverage showed the stark contrast between people who merely profess belief in God and people who truly live according to God's teachings.

In *Zambia* a journalist wrote a newspaper article that linked Jehovah's Witnesses with Satanism. The branch office was assisted with guidelines on how to contact the editor of the newspaper, and a sample "letter to the editor" was provided. The editor was presented with a copy of the *Knowledge* book and the *Spirits of the Dead* brochure. He promised to handle the matter. The very next morning, under the heading "Jehovah's Witnesses Against Satanism," the letter to the editor was published with no changes.

Because of misrepresentation and misinformation, public opinion in some European countries mistakenly linked Jehovah's Witnesses with dangerous cults. Branches have been assisted in developing responses that clarify our activities as an organization and that put to rest fears the government may have about us.

In contrast to the spiritual darkness in the world, the light of truth continues to shine brilliantly. How apt the words of the apostle Paul at Philippians 2:15: "You are shining as illuminators in the world"! We pray for Jehovah's direction and blessing on the efforts that are being made to correct misconceptions and prejudices about the organization and activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. It is hoped that by continuing to 'let our light shine' in this manner, further praise will be given to Jehovah, whose light illuminates our path.—Ps. 36:9.



AFRICA

Africa is a continent where many languages are spoken—not only those brought in from Europe but also some 750 others. Jehovah's loving purpose is that men, women, and children "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" be included among those who will be saved through the "great tribulation." (Rev. 7:9, 14) This means that they need an opportunity to learn about Jehovah. In order for them not only to hear but also to gain an accurate knowledge of his ways, the Society publishes literature in 127 of those languages spoken mainly by Africans. (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Nine of the languages were added this past service year, and work is under way on publications in 11 more. This year, in *Tanzania* and *Kenya*, the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* was released in Swahili. It was also released in *Botswana* and *South Africa* in the Tswana language.

One of the highlights of the year in *Angola* was the receipt and distribution of the *Knowledge* book and *Require*

brochure in three of the vernacular languages—Kimbundu, Kikongo, and Umbundu. Such instruments enable the publishers to use simple, direct presentations and to start Bible studies on the first call. The number of home Bible studies in Angola reached a new peak of 71,000, which is more than two per publisher. The increase in the number of Kingdom proclaimers has also been outstanding, reaching 16 percent! Right in and around Luanda, the capital, there are now some 350 congregations, divided into 17 circuits.

A sister in *Ethiopia* was witnessing to other travelers while walking on the road, but she did not know that someone behind her was listening. After the others had scorned the message, that humble man came up and asked for a Bible study. For each study, he had to walk nine hours one way and nine hours to return. When he wanted to become a publisher, the circuit overseer was invited to visit him. What a surprise when the circuit overseer found 30 people waiting for him! That Bible student had been sharing what he learned. They had many questions, and the discussion with them lasted until three in the morning. But the circuit overseer had not yet discussed with the Bible student the qualifications for new publishers. To keep another appointment, the circuit overseer had to leave in the morning. The Bible student walked with him, and the circuit overseer asked questions as they traveled. At last, the circuit overseer told the Bible student that he qualified. They prayed and then parted. That humble man got baptized in January 1997. He still walks long distances—12 hours round trip—to attend meetings.

In recent years the field in *Burkina Faso* has seen a great influx of missionaries; 42 now serve in this sub-Saharan country. Some of these have benefited from Gilead School or the Ministerial Training School before undertaking this assignment. Others as pioneers simply had the training that all

of Jehovah's people receive in their Kingdom Halls. At great personal sacrifice, but with confidence in Jehovah, other pioneers from France have moved here on their own to serve where the need is greater. Jehovah is surely blessing the efforts of these zealous proclaimers of his Kingdom.

A woman in Harare, *Zimbabwe*, began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, making use of the *Live Forever* book. However, her husband accused her of wasting the family's money by buying books that were worthless. He urged her to associate with another religion. In time they left town to live at their rural home in Chendambuya. There the family came down with malaria. While lying in bed, the husband picked up an old copy of *The Watchtower* that his wife had kept. Then he read the *Live Forever* book. He thoroughly enjoyed it. The wife asked if she could join him in the reading. So they studied together. "At this other church where you are going, do they teach this?" he asked her. "No," she replied. "No more going there," he said. "We must find the church that produces these books." "But that is the church you said you did not want me to go to," she reminded him. "I know that. But let's find these people anyway." At their request, a Witness called on them and immediately started a study in the *Knowledge* book. Within a month they had completed the book. They got baptized in August at the district convention.

Local funeral customs are among the "strongly entrenched things" with which our brothers in *Senegal* must contend. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5) Burial rites are often accompanied by practices associated with the belief that the soul is immortal. When an 89-year-old Witness in a village near Dakar died recently, her son ruled out participation in any funeral rites contrary to the Bible. The tribal custom dictates that a white

cloth, to cover the body before the burial, be supplied by the father's family. However, before the cloth is used, a section of it is to be torn off and cut into strips that are then attached around the wrist and neck of close family members. Not only does this identify them as members of the family but people superstitiously believe that it protects them from displeasing the dead person. The family of our brother were the first ones to refrain from observing this custom, to the amazement of the entire village. A Roman Catholic counselor remarked: "What we have been trying to do for 15 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have done in one day. I think that they have another force." Over 400 people from this island village attended the funeral of the aged mother. Many there are now asking Bible questions and receiving satisfying answers.

Our brothers in *Zaire* (now *Democratic Republic of Congo*) have been greatly comforted by Psalm 112:7, which reads: "He will not be afraid even of bad news. His heart is steadfast, made reliant upon Jehovah." The year began well with a new peak of 104,134 publishers. Then war broke out in the eastern part of the country and spread across to the west. Brothers at the branch office in Kinshasa were unable to keep in contact with those in the occupied territories. However, there were 180 circuit overseers and 11 district overseers throughout the country, and they were strengthening and encouraging the brothers. Hakizimana Musa, one of the circuit overseers, wrote: "I often think of Psalm 46:1 when I travel on my bicycle to visit the brothers. I know they need encouragement in these critical times. Sometimes I see burned-out houses and everyone has fled—even the birds have gone! I have been stopped by soldiers and warned not to continue because of danger. Even though I was afraid and my heart was beating hard, I said a prayer and continued in order to get to the next congregation."

The branch was not able to send relief supplies into the occupied areas, but how grateful the brothers there were when a team of Witnesses from Europe went in as aid workers with the needed supplies. In May 1997 the capital, Kinshasa, fell. While TV audiences across the world watched graphic and horrifying pictures of impoverished, starving war refugees, Jehovah's people kept neutral in the conflict. In spite of hunger, sickness, and the need to flee their homes, they peacefully kept declaring the good news of God's Kingdom. Perhaps release of the *Require* brochure in the Uruund language did not seem important in other parts of the world. But by using it there, a congregation of 56 publishers started 150 Bible studies to help people who very much needed the support that only God can give.

A pioneer in *Nigeria* used the *Require* brochure to witness to a fellow passenger in an intercity taxicab. They discussed together some of the points from the lesson entitled "Practices That God Hates." The man listened attentively, asked questions, and obtained a brochure. When they stopped for refreshments and were in the restaurant, the man turned to the pioneer and showed him a package. "What is in it?" asked the pioneer. "It is money. But I do not know how much is in it, since the money is not mine. I took it from one of the traveling bags in the back of the taxi." Now, because of what the Witness had shown him in the brochure, the man said he would like to return the money to the owner. The owner, a young merchant, quickly identified it. The package contained 150,000 naira (about \$1,700). The man who took the money had been trailing his victim for 300 miles. He told the merchant to thank the pioneer because it was the brochure that made him change his mind. Amazed, the driver and the other passengers wanted copies of the brochure. The merchant had never previously allowed the Witnesses to speak to him, but now he wanted a Bible study.



ASIA AND ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC

The Asian mainland is inhabited by a large portion of the earth's population. In addition, there are thousands of islands—some large, others small—scattered across the oceans. Wherever there are people, Jehovah's Witnesses have endeavored to reach them with the good news of God's Kingdom.

The value of getting Bible literature into the hands of people is illustrated in the following experience from an island country to the southeast of India. In the early 1980's, a Witness in *Sri Lanka* placed a *Live Forever* book with a man who lived in a town where there were no Witnesses. In 1985 he began to read the book by himself, and he recognized it as the truth. Then he read it with his family, and he began reading and discussing it with his close friends. Soon a group of 11 were meeting in his house to discuss the information. They broke off ties with false religion, and they knew that they should also preach to others. In January 1997 the branch received a letter from them requesting help.

When a special pioneer couple was sent to visit them, they earnestly requested: "Can you please teach us how to pray?" After many questions and much discussion, the pioneers were invited to stay overnight. The next day at 6:00 a.m., the pioneers were awakened by an excited householder who was eager to have more questions answered. By 9:00 a.m., 16 people had arrived at the home. An impromptu public talk was given, more questions were answered, and at last at 2:00 p.m. the pioneers began their trip home. Regular meetings are now being held in that area.

On her way to meet another Witness, a sister in *Lebanon* met an elderly woman resting because she was carrying heavy things. When the sister offered to help, the woman exclaimed: "Do such people still exist?" She thanked the sister very much and insisted on inviting her to have a cup of coffee. The sister accepted the invitation, seized the opportunity to witness to her, and promised to bring her the *Knowledge* book. Although she said that she did not like Jehovah's Witnesses, the woman accepted the book. On the return visit, the sister met the woman's daughter, and the daughter was very pleased with what she heard. A regular Bible study in the *Knowledge* book is now being conducted with her.

Some who are influential in political affairs appreciate the work done by Jehovah's Witnesses. But others, under heavy pressure from the clergy, impose restrictions on the Witnesses. We are grateful, however, that during the past year, legal recognition was granted to Jehovah's Witnesses in *Pakistan, Malaysia, and Kazakhstan*.

A local church elder in *Pakistan* used to tell the people that they should not let the Witnesses into their homes because the Witnesses do not believe in Jesus and their

doctrines are not true. However, a special pioneer was studying with a family who did not want to stop. One day the church elder came to visit that family while they were having their regular Bible study. He sat quietly during the study and was amazed to find that the Witnesses really teach the Bible. As a result, a study was started with the church elder. He began to attend the congregation meetings and is now a baptized Witness. Through that former church elder, six other persons became regular attenders of the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are many towns in *Malaysia* with more than 30,000 people but without a single Witness. With such a large population to reach with the good news, the publishers there have a big assignment. Some areas are very fruitful. Using a brochure entitled *Everlasting Life in Paradise!*, which had recently been translated into Kadazan-Dusun, four temporary special pioneers assigned to Sabah, northern part of Borneo, were able to establish 50 home Bible studies during a three-month period.

Providing Bible literature in the many languages of the Orient is a monumental task. It is already available in languages that are at least understood to some extent by the majority. But what a difference it makes when something is published in the native tongue of people! An older sister in *Kyrgyzstan* who did not know Russian had found her ministry quite restricted. But when the *Knowledge* book became available in Kirghiz, she zealously put it to use. As a result, people from other villages heard about it and came to visit her—coming on foot, on bicycles, or by a donkey-pulled wagon. The Witness now has several Bible studies and is very grateful that she has something in her own language with which to spread the good news.



EUROPE

For over 100 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have been proclaiming the good news in Europe. Many Witnesses from Europe have moved out to other lands where there is a great need for Kingdom proclaimers. During the 1990's, special attention has been directed toward giving an intensive witness in Eastern Europe. And in recent years, large numbers of immigrants from lands in which there are relatively few Witnesses have moved to Europe, where there are large numbers of Witnesses who are glad to welcome them and to share with them the good news of God's Kingdom. All of this contributes to a witness being given to "the most distant part of the earth," in harmony with what Jesus foretold.—Acts 1:8.

In many lands, immigrants are responding readily to the Kingdom message. When local Witnesses do what they can to share Bible truths with these people, Jehovah's spirit opens their hearts. That was true in the case of a Latin-American refugee in *Norway*. He observed nicely dressed people,

young and old, going to a Kingdom Hall next to the refugee center. He also attended some meetings at the Kingdom Hall and liked what he saw, but he could not understand any Norwegian, and no one there could speak Spanish. Nevertheless, a Bible study was started with him. The Witness used the *Knowledge* book and the *New World Translation* in Norwegian; the interested man used the same publications in Spanish. By their adhering strictly to the study material and emphasizing the scriptures, rapid progress was made. The order, harmony, and friendly atmosphere that the man found in the congregation strengthened his conviction that he had found God's people.

After a few months, he wanted to become a publisher, but because of the language problem, the elders could not discern whether he was qualified. However, a Spanish circuit assembly was coming up in Oslo, 1,500 miles away. Some of the brothers donated money for the airfare so that he could attend it. Spanish-speaking elders at the assembly found that he was indeed qualified, and at the assembly he shared in the field ministry for the first time. Right from the beginning, he put forth great effort to witness to other refugees at the center and to invite them to the Kingdom Hall. In this way Bible studies were started with refugees from South America, Africa, and Europe. One year after he had attended his first meeting at the Kingdom Hall, he got baptized.

Some young people respond to the truth like a sponge immersed in water. That proved to be true of Marko, a student in *Finland*. A teacher had told him that one of Jehovah's Witnesses worked at the music institute. Marko approached the Witness to ask her view on certain issues, but there was only limited time to talk. That evening the Witness phoned Marko and told him that he might borrow some books from her if he wanted more information. He promptly went to her home, where she and her husband answered some

of his questions and gave him the *Require* brochure, the *Organization* video, and the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* In a few days, he was back to ask for more literature. His conversation showed that he had really absorbed what he had read. This time he was provided with the *Knowledge* book and a Bible. The arrangement for Bible studies with interested people was explained to him, but first he wanted to read the book on his own. Within a week he read the entire book and checked the scriptures. Before his first Bible study, he had withdrawn from the church. He quickly began to witness to relatives, friends, and teachers at the music institute. Three and a half months after he had his first study, he was baptized.

A woman in *Estonia*, a Russian-language teacher, had been deeply involved in spiritism for 20 years when she met Jehovah's Witnesses. She had taken courses on the use of the pendulum to identify the sick organs in people. (The pendulum would start moving when questions were asked.) She had shared in an assembly where practitioners of extrasensory perception from all over the Soviet Union were present. She had participated in New Age meetings. Why? Her mother was very sick, and she was seeking a way to bring her relief. She knew that Jesus cured people, and she believed that spirit healers today must be God's servants. She did not know that the power to perform cures could come from a source other than God. (Deut. 18:10-12; Matt. 7:15-23) But the demons started to bite and strangle her. She desperately needed help. Disappointed with other religious groups, she got in touch with Jehovah's Witnesses. A Bible study with her was started immediately. She learned how to pray and how to resist the Devil. When she understood how Jehovah views spiritism, she burned her spiritistic literature and destroyed her five pendulums. Within four months, she was sharing in the field service, helping others to benefit from the truths that

had done so much to set her free. Now she serves as a continuous auxiliary pioneer, grateful to be numbered among Jehovah's happy people.

Dámaris, teenage daughter of an elder in *Spain*, acknowledges that it was hard for her to start witnessing to her classmates. But she observed that most of them smoked or were having problems with drugs. She knew that they needed help. Finally she spoke to a classmate about the effects of drugs and smoking. Dámaris explained that she had a book discussing subjects of interest to all young people, including the effects of using drugs. The girl asked to see the book, and it was passed from one to another in the class. About a third of the class wanted personal copies of *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. The result: The first one to whom Dámaris witnessed stopped smoking, and the way has been opened for further discussions.

During the war in the former Yugoslavia, our brothers there went through very difficult times. In a material way, they were reduced to poverty, but in a spiritual way they are rich. For example, at the district convention in Zagreb, *Croatia*, they were touched by heartwarming experiences from Vukovar. This is a city in Croatia that was under Serbian control, and now it is again under the control of Croatia. Some of the worst devastation of the war occurred there, and most of the population, including our brothers, had to flee the area in order to save their lives. For four years the brothers in Croatia did not know that there was a sister, Maria, who had stayed behind in that city. She preached, at first all by herself, and occasionally was able to travel to a nearby congregation in Serbia. Her zeal during the wartime was richly rewarded. Can you imagine how surprised brothers at the district convention were to welcome a group of about 20 persons from Vukovar!



THE AMERICAS

As a result of their zealous ministry, Jehovah's Witnesses are well-known throughout the Americas. Many people, though they personally do not choose to live according to Bible standards, admire the work the Witnesses do. They may even be impressed with some of the practical counsel on life that the Witnesses show them from the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses, of course, also endeavor to help them to know and appreciate Jehovah God, the Source of that counsel, and his loving purpose for humankind.

Although pioneers work hard to take the Kingdom message to people, they hardly expect to receive a medal for their work. Yet that is exactly what happened to one of our special pioneers in *Venezuela*. Carmen Bravo was surprised one day to receive an invitation from the town's "Páez Ladies' Committee" to attend a celebration at which she was to receive a medal for her "valuable contribution in the religious field." But why? The town of Guasualito has experienced

considerable guerrilla activity, but 70-year-old Carmen has a calming effect on the people as she answers their questions from the Bible, conducts Bible studies, and places Bible literature. Many people in that town read and appreciate *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* Also, the authorities are impressed by the number of marriages that have been legalized as a result of the evangelizing work of Jehovah's Witnesses. All in all, Carmen is viewed as an asset to the community. Carmen happily accepted the medal, but she humbly feels that she is simply being used by Jehovah to take his message to people. —Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.

In *Puerto Rico*, Jehovah's Witnesses appeared before a board of government officials in connection with use of a stadium for a convention. A man who had for many years been involved in the issuing of permits for use of the facilities asked to speak first to the board. He told them that once a year when Jehovah's Witnesses used the stadium, it got its most thorough cleaning. The year before, an air-conditioning unit in one area had failed. After the Witnesses' convention, he found that they had repaired the unit free of charge. They had also repaired certain parts of the electrical system and the plumbing. And the parking area was kept spick-and-span. The board voted to let the Witnesses use the stadium free of charge for their coming convention.

Because of heavy drug trafficking in a very poor area in *Haiti*, soldiers searched and destroyed a number of houses. However, when they saw *The Watchtower* and other publications of the Society in Anna's house, they said: "We must not destroy this house. Jehovah's Witnesses do not engage in drug trafficking." Upon observing this, a neighbor ran to her own house and laid out her Protestant religious literature. When the soldiers arrived, she told them that they did not need to search her home because she also had religious books. They

looked at the books and said: "No, these are not the same." And they destroyed that house. Anna was not yet one of Jehovah's Witnesses. But after that experience, she prayed to Jehovah to help her bring her life into harmony with his righteous standards. She is now a baptized Witness.

At the congregation in El Cruce de Cajamarca, *Peru*, a special pioneer met Rafael. Arrangements were made to study the *Knowledge* book with him and his family. Because of the great distance to his home, at the beginning the study was not held each week. At the first study the brother was surprised to learn that Rafael did not believe in the Trinity, hellfire, or the "saints." To the question, "Where did you learn this?" he replied, "By reading this book," and he got out the *Live Forever* book. "However, more is required than just reading it," he added. "I need someone to help me." (Compare Acts 8:31.) At the second study, Rafael said that he and his wife were dedicating Sundays to visiting their neighbors and teaching them what they had learned. On the pioneer's third visit, he found Rafael making *shepherding calls* using the information in the September 15, 1993, *Watchtower*, the same one that the pioneer used when making shepherding visits. In a short time, both Rafael and his wife became unbaptized publishers, and this past August both of them got baptized.

While the number of Kingdom proclaimers in *Mexico* has increased at a breathtaking rate in recent years, the Legal Department at the branch has also worked diligently so that the rights of our brothers would be treated with respect. One way that this has been done is by constant communication with the authorities to assure them of our willingness to resolve problems peaceably. Thus, in Chiapas State, while an issue regarding noninvolvement of the Witnesses in local religious festivals was being resolved in court—and the decision was in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses—the Witnesses also

used the opportunity to make clear that they are very willing to cooperate in community activities that are not religious or political. Officials who dealt with the matter were impressed with the cleanliness, dignity, and respect evident among these humble farmers who are Jehovah's Witnesses.

An elder in Maine, in the *United States*, finds witnessing on ships to be one of the most productive features of his ministry. In one case, he witnessed to the chief officer on a ship from the Philippines. Acting on what he had learned from his own Bible reading, the man had already withdrawn from the Catholic Church. On the initial call, the elder discussed with him the tract *Enjoy Family Life*. Since the ship was to be in port for just four days, the first return visit was made that same night, and two more followed thereafter. Our brother brought along six of the Society's videos. The conversations and videos had such an impact on this officer that he felt major changes needed to be made in his life. He expressed a strong desire to learn more from God's Word and to apply it personally.

Among the 37 district conventions scheduled for *Canada* this past year were 9 in the province of Quebec. One of these was in Quebec City, where 9,213 attended. Five were held on consecutive weekends in Sherbrooke. Total attendance for all nine conventions in the province was 32,181. What a change from the experiences that Jehovah's Witnesses had there in the 1940's and 1950's! Hundreds were arrested at that time. Some faced mobs. But they kept on obeying God as ruler; they refused to stop telling people about God's Kingdom. As a result of their persistence, laws in Canada changed, with greater protection for the freedoms of all Canadians. Now there are also 12 thriving congregations in Quebec City and 4 in Sherbrooke. Jehovah has blessed the continued loyal service of his Witnesses.

Acts of Jehovah's Witnesses in Modern Times

Japan

Japan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. It is known for the gracious manners of its people. It is also known as an industrial giant. And among Jehovah's Witnesses, it has a reputation of having one of the highest proportions of Witnesses who are pioneer ministers. Learn why as you read this interesting report.

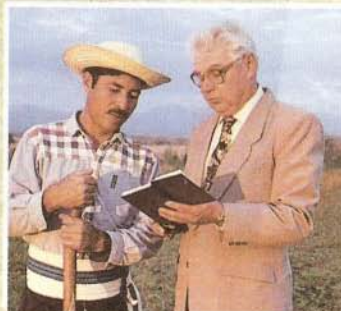


Martinique

Shackles of slavery have had a profound effect on the history of Martinique. But for half a century, a message of freedom has been announced there with increasing intensity. As you read this account, you will get to know the people of Martinique—their thinking, their customs, and their way of life. Learn how Bible truth has affected all of these.

Paraguay

For decades, witnessing in Paraguay has involved facing up to the powerful influence of the Roman Catholic clergy. That situation is changing. Roman Catholicism is no longer the State religion. The language spoken is not always Spanish. Most of the people speak Guarani. Others speak languages of Europe or of Asia. How is the good news reaching them?



JAPAN

TENACIOUS hard work and unity of purpose are among the qualities that have brought Japan from the devastation of World War II to its modern role as one of the industrial giants of the world. Today this country of 125 million people is known as much for the trade names of its cameras, cars, and electric appliances as it is for its cherry blossoms, azaleas, and 12,388-foot snowcapped Mount Fuji.

However, theocratic progress following the war has been even more impressive. In 1951 a convention in Tokyo was attended by some 40 missionary graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and about 200 native Japanese publishers. N. H. Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society, said that he looked forward to the time when there would be so many native Japanese proclaimers of the Kingdom that it would be hard to search out the missionaries among them. That day was not too long in coming! With Jesus Christ as the foundation, it took *ten years* for the missionaries, as God's fellow workers, to gather the first 1,000 Japanese publishers. But in 1992, on an average, 1,000 new publishers were being added *each month*. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:9-11.) The total number of ministers of God's Kingdom on the islands that make up Japan has peaked at 220,663, a new peak having been reached each month for more than 18



years. What has occurred is an exciting part of the fulfillment of Isaiah 60:8, 9, which says: "Who are these that come flying just like a cloud, and like doves to their birdhouse holes? For in me the islands themselves will keep hoping."

The 1973 *Yearbook* reported some of this early history from Japan, up to the year 1972, when there were about 14,000 publishers, including more than 3,000 in the rapidly expanding pioneer service. This history is here reviewed and extended 25 years.

Early Seeds of Kingdom Truth

In this traditionally Buddhist and Shinto land, how were the seeds that have yielded such an abundant spiritual harvest sown? In 1911, C. T. Russell, then the president of the Watch Tower Society, made a fact-finding tour of Japan. He reported that the missionaries of Christendom were considerably discouraged and that the people in general displayed little genuine interest in religion. He felt, however, that what the people needed was the "Gospel of the Kingdom." R. R. Hollister, an American, was appointed as the Society's representative in the Orient. Tracts and books, including *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, were translated, and millions of copies were distributed, primarily by hired native workers. In 1926, Junzo Akashi, a Japanese-American, was sent to Japan as the Society's representative. A branch office was established in Kobe early in 1927, and it was transferred to Tokyo later that year. By 1938 the number of colporteurs distributing magazines and books had grown to 110. But fanatic religious nationalism was being fanned throughout the country, and this led directly into World War II. On June 21, 1939, in one fell swoop, 130 members of the *Todaisha* (meaning "Lighthouse Association," as the local organization of Jehovah's Witnesses was then called) were arrested and imprisoned, effectively ending organized activity during the war years.

Unhappily, the branch overseer apostatized under the pressure. With a few loyal exceptions, such as the Ishii and Miura families, most of the *Todaisha* followed him in quitting Jehovah's service. The failure of this group can be attributed also to their following a man, Junzo Akashi. He adopted the traditional Japanese custom of polygamy, even though he already had a wife. She continued to pioneer faithfully for 40 years and more in New York, and she is still fondly remembered by some in West Manhattan as Sister Ogawachi. When Gilead missionaries entered Japan after the war, they located a large group of *Todaisha* in Osaka. These charged money for baptisms, and even worse, they had followed Akashi in adopting a very immoral life-style. They declined to give up that way of life; so for the purity of the congregation, some 30 of them had to be disfellowshipped.

Those Who Remained Faithful

In contrast, consider Jizo and Matsue Ishii, who were among the first Japanese colporteurs. They covered the entire country during the years 1929 to 1939. In June 1939 they were arrested and jailed in Sendai. Matsue still remembers her first year of solitary confinement in a tiny, filthy, flea-infested cell. She was not allowed to shower or bathe, and her flesh was eaten by bedbugs. She was reduced to 70 pounds, just skin and bones, and came to be near death. On being sent to another prison, she regained some of her health, and she was released toward the end of 1944. Her husband received like treatment, and later he showed his integrity also when he refused blood transfusions. (Acts 21:25) He died at 71 years of age. Matsue has continued as a faithful Witness to this day. She remarks: "Most of those from before the war who excelled in ability and intellect left God's organization when subjected to great pressure. . . . Those who remained faithful had no special

abilities and were inconspicuous. Surely all of us must trust in Jehovah with all our heart.”—Prov. 3:5.

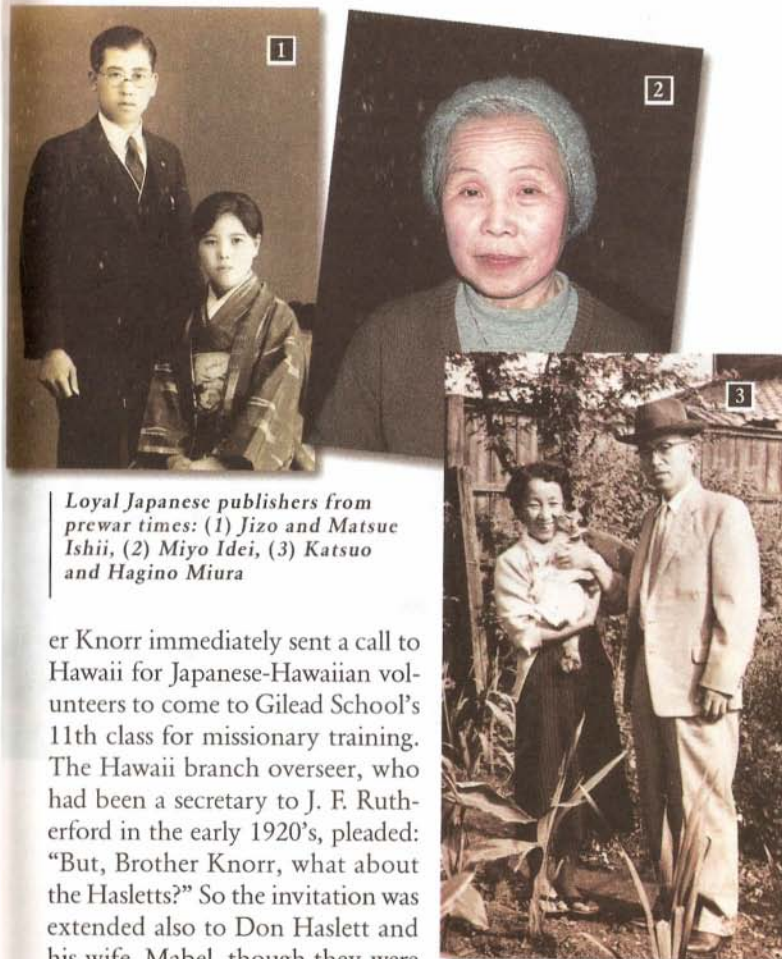
Another faithful couple were Katsuo and Hagino Miura, who entered the colporteur service in 1931. They too were arrested in 1939, in Hiroshima. They refused to worship the emperor or support Japan’s militarism. Katsuo was severely beaten, and he suffered in confinement until an atom bomb destroyed the prison in August 1945. Though he was only 38, his health had been ruined. On release, he looked like an old man. He returned north to Ishinomori, where Hagino, released earlier, was raising their young son, Tsutomu.

How did Katsuo meet up with Jehovah’s organization again? Japan’s leading newspaper, *Asahi*, learned that five young ladies, Watch Tower missionaries, had come to Osaka to live Japanese-style in a Japanese house. Reporters visited them and prepared a splendid illustrated article that compared the five sisters to angels who, like cherry blossoms, had floated down from heaven. The article also supplied the address of the missionary home. Hundreds of miles to the north, Katsuo chanced upon the article. Immediately he made contact again with the organization and enrolled as a pioneer. He served faithfully until his death in 1957.

Serving to this day in Kobe, Japan, is Miyo Idei, now 92 years old. She has endured many hardships during her 65 years in the truth. Her thrilling life story appeared in *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1991.

“The 49ers”

Conditions for preaching had become much more favorable following World War II. But in 1947, Junzo Akashi notified the Watch Tower Society’s office in Brooklyn, New York, that he no longer agreed with Bible teachings. Broth-



Loyal Japanese publishers from prewar times: (1) Jizo and Matsue Ishii, (2) Miyo Idei, (3) Katsuo and Hagino Miura

er Knorr immediately sent a call to Hawaii for Japanese-Hawaiian volunteers to come to Gilead School’s 11th class for missionary training. The Hawaii branch overseer, who had been a secretary to J. F. Rutherford in the early 1920’s, pleaded: “But, Brother Knorr, what about the Hasletts?” So the invitation was extended also to Don Haslett and his wife, Mabel, though they were close to 50 years of age. At Gilead, Shinichi Tohara and Elsie Tanigawa taught Japanese to more than 20 students.

During 1949 “the Hawaiians”—Don and Mabel Haslett, Jerry and Yoshi Toma, Shinichi and Masako Tohara and their



Some missionaries who began to serve in Japan in 1949-50:

- (1) Don and Mabel Haslett, (2) Lloyd and Melba Barry, (3) Jerry and Yoshi Toma, (4) Elsie Tanigawa, (5, 6) Percy and Ilma Iszlaub, (7) Norrine Thompson (née Miller), (8) Adrian Thompson, (9) Lois Dyer, (10) Molly Heron, (11) Shinichi and Masako Tohara

three children, and Elsie Tanigawa—took up assignments in the bombed-out city of Tokyo. In the same year, these were followed by the Australian group, made up of Adrian Thompson, Percy and Ilma Iszlaub, and Lloyd and Melba Barry, who were assigned to the war-devastated city of Kobe. These first

missionaries in Japan came to be called “the 49ers.” Of these, six have died in their assignment, “with their boots on,” as the saying goes, and eight others are still serving full-time in Japan and in Brooklyn, New York. In 1949, eight local publishers also reported time spent in Kingdom service.

Growth in Tokyo

The Hawaiian group made remarkable progress in Tokyo. Yoshi Toma recalls that in that postwar year, they worked

the territory "from dugout to dugout." She says: "The people were poor and struggling to recover from the effects of the war. Food was rationed, and Don Haslett would stand in line with the neighbors for his head of cabbage." But the householders were gracious and kind, listening patiently while these missionaries struggled with their Japanese presentations. The missionaries had to learn to take off their shoes upon entering a house. Then they would step up into the adjoining room. But ceilings were low, and Don Haslett, who was tall, got many a scar from hitting his head. Within a year or two, "the Hawaiians" built a solid foundation in Tokyo, which now has 139 congregations.

Of "the 49ers," anointed Witnesses Don and Mabel Haslett set a marvelous example in the field work even when advanced in years. When Don died in 1966, the six brothers who carried his casket into the Kingdom Hall for the memorial service were all young men whom he had led to the truth and who at that time were serving in the 19-member Japan Bethel family, in Tokyo.

Mabel survived Don by eight years. Well on in her 70's, she developed cancer of the colon. A leading Tokyo hospital at Toranomon considerably agreed to operate without blood, on the condition that she go into the hospital two weeks beforehand. On her first day there, a young doctor visited her bed, curious to know why she refused blood. This led to fine Bible discussions that continued every day until the operation. Because of the seriousness of the case, four doctors participated. As Mabel regained consciousness, she exclaimed: "Curse old Adam!" How fitting! Mabel was under intensive care for only one day, whereas four other patients who had the same surgery that day but with blood transfusions were several days in the intensive care unit. And what of the young doctor? Later he told Mabel: 'You didn't know it, but there were

five doctors in that operating room. I went there as well, to make absolutely sure that they did not give you blood.' Dr. Tominaga continued his Bible study in Yokohama. Today, he and his doctor-father and their wives are active members of the congregation. Wonderful fruitage from a stay in the hospital!

Mabel continued her missionary service from the Tokyo Mita missionary home. When she was 78 years old, the cancer returned, and she was confined to bed. However, when the missionaries came home one evening and related the fine experiences they were having in a *Kingdom News* campaign, Mabel insisted that they dress her and take her out to distribute *Kingdom News*. She had strength enough to visit only three nearby homes, the same three where she had first witnessed on arrival in Japan. Several weeks later she finished her earthly course and passed on to her heavenly assignment. —Compare Luke 22:28, 29.

Developments in Kobe

In Kobe too the growth was soon evident. The first truly theocratic convention in Japan was held on the grounds of the spacious Kobe missionary home, from December 30, 1949, to January 1, 1950. The attendance swelled to 101 at the Sunday Public Meeting, held in the Tarumi, Kobe, school auditorium. Three were baptized in the large Tarumi public bathhouse.

Adrian Thompson, from the Kobe missionary group, made remarkable progress with the Japanese language and, in 1951, was appointed to be the first circuit overseer in Japan. Later he became the first district overseer. He did much to lay a solid basis for the growth to come. The son of a longtime faithful pioneer sister in New Zealand, he had made a name for himself as a rugby footballer of the top-line class, but when World War II broke out, he left the limelight of sports, became a baptized Witness, and then took up full-time

service in Australia. Though he died in 1977, "Tommy" will long be remembered for his boundless energy and "insistence on exclusive devotion" to Jehovah.—Num. 25:11.

It took time for the missionaries to get used to the Japanese homes, culture, and language, but their principal interest was in sharing Bible truth with others. "Tiger" (Percy) Iszlaub, an outgoing Australian Queenslander, reminisced: "We conducted a lot of Bible studies. I had 36, and Ilma and the rest had about the same. Students used to come to the missionary home to study, some every day. There were Bible studies being conducted in every room of the house, three or more each night. We spread out the study material in both English and Japanese. To help students, we would both count down so many lines to where the answer was. It was slow going, but it was amazing how they would catch on just by reading the scriptures and comparing these with the publications. And they are in the truth today!"

In the early days, the missionaries had little Kingdom literature for their preaching. A prewar carton of the Japanese edition of *Light*, Book Two, had turned up in Kobe, but people would say, 'I would prefer to read Book One first.' One of the very first Japanese to come into the truth in Kobe, however, got interested through reading Book Two and matured, in time, to become a circuit overseer. Soon, material from the book "*Let God Be True*" was being used. A few who were studying made their own translations of chapters of the book, and these were mimeographed and lent among the missionaries for use at other Bible studies. But some of those translations were questionable. Ilma Iszlaub was shocked when she found that 'interpretations by Mrs. Ilma Iszlaub' had been inserted as footnotes on the pages of one such translation.

Some ten years later, in the city of Fukuoka, Percy had a monumental experience. Kimihiro Nakata, a violent death-

row prisoner who had been paid to kill two men, requested a Bible study, and it was Percy who studied with him. As a result, Kimihiro completely abandoned his "old personality." He was baptized in the prison, and Percy described him as "one of the most zealous Kingdom publishers I have known." (Eph. 4:22-24) He studied Braille and transcribed the book "*Let God Be True*," the booklet "*This Good News of the Kingdom*," and *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles into Braille. These publications were distributed to various parts of Japan, including schools for the blind. However, early on June 10, 1959, a police car pulled up at the missionary home. Kimihiro had requested Percy's presence at his execution that morning. Percy complied. In the execution yard, they conversed briefly, and at the last, they sang a Kingdom song together. Kimihiro said to Percy: "Why are you shivering, Percy? I am the one who should be nervous." Before he was hanged, his last words were: "Today I feel strongly confident in Jehovah and in the ransom sacrifice and the resurrection hope. For a little while I will sleep, and if it be Jehovah's will, I shall meet you all in the Paradise." He sent warm greetings to his brothers around the world. Kimihiro died to satisfy justice, giving life for life—not as a hopeless, hardened criminal, but as a dedicated, baptized, faithful servant of Jehovah.—Compare Acts 25:11.

After fighting cancer for some ten years, Ilma Iszlaub died at the Ebina, Japan, Bethel Home on January 29, 1988. Thereafter, as a member of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Percy attended the Society's annual meetings several times, giving a fine report about Japan on a recent occasion; then he too died, in 1996.

Despite the language barrier, Melba Barry started a Bible study on her first day of field service in Kobe, late in 1949. Two new publishers resulted from the study, and one of these, Miyo Takagi, pioneered for several decades. She told Melba later that she had been impressed at seeing two missionary sisters

come through a muddy field to visit her. Now, 48 years later, a wheelchair carries Miyo from house to house as she continues in her ministry. In less than three years, before being reassigned to missionary service in Tokyo, Melba helped some seven persons to accept the truth. These have endured over the years, and happily, they also survived the great Kobe earthquake of 1995.

More Missionaries Into the Field

Early in 1950, five sisters from Gilead's 11th class who had been unable to gain visas for entry into New Caledonia were reassigned to Kobe, Japan. These included Lois Dyer, who has pioneered now for 67 years, and Molly Heron. They have been partners for the past 49 years, serving at present out of the Tokyo Mita missionary home. Lois' life story appeared in the June 15, 1980, *Watchtower*.

Molly Heron recalls: "The Kobe home was spacious, and we held the Memorial six months after the first missionaries arrived. About 180 showed up, filling the dining room and the hallway, and some were even listening to the interpreted talk through the windows." After hearing an announcement at that meeting regarding field service, some 35 turned up the next morning (Sunday) to participate. Brother Barry reports: "Each missionary had to take three or four of the newly interested ones to the doors, and since the missionaries were not as yet fluent in the language, the householders would turn to our Japanese companions and converse with them. What these newly interested people told the householders, we never did learn."

Late in June 1950, the Korean War suddenly exploded. Of course, the missionaries in Japan wanted to know how the eight members of their class serving in Korea were faring. They did not have to wait long. On the second day after the outbreak of war, some of the Kobe missionaries were return-



N. H. Knorr (left, above) addressing assembly, in 1951, at Kobe missionary home

ing home by commuter train. A train from the opposite direction arrived at the station at the same time. When the two trains departed, behold! The Kobe missionaries saw the eight members of the Korean missionary group standing on the other platform. What a reunion they had! Those in Korea had been able to get out of the country on the last plane that carried civilians. Now the Kobe home increased from 10 to 18 missionaries. The territory in that city, much of it in ruins, received a *very* thorough witness.

Soon Scott and Alice Counts went on to the Tokyo home, but in October, all eight Korean missionaries moved to a new home that was opened in Nagoya. Of the group from Korea, only Don Steele and his wife, Earlene, returned to that country when conditions allowed.

Fields Ripe for Harvesting

Grace and Gladys Gregory were among those who shared in opening the Nagoya home. They found the territory ripe

for harvesting. In April 1951, Grace met 18-year-old Isamu Sugiura, who was working for a piano dealer. Gladys recalls: "Isamu's mother had raised him in a Shinto sect, and he had been told that Japan was *shinsbu* (divine land) and that the *ka-mikaze* (divine wind) would protect Japan and help them win the war. His faith in the Japanese gods was shattered, however, when Japan surrendered and he experienced the terrible economic conditions and food shortages caused by the war. His father died from malnutrition the year after the war ended. Young Isamu responded to the hope of a paradise earth and was baptized at a circuit assembly in October 1951."

About 50 missionaries attended that assembly, along with some 250 Japanese. Isamu was deeply impressed by the fact that the missionaries were freely mixing with the Japanese without prejudice, though World War II had ended just six years earlier. After 45 years of whole-souled service, including Gilead School and circuit and district work, Brother Sugiura is now serving at Bethel in Ebina as a member of the Branch Committee.

Gladys Gregory remembers calling on a woman who had been a nominal Buddhist and who later had turned to churches of Christendom; but she had left these, in disillusionment. She had become disappointed when the pastors could not clearly explain who God is and why they did not use God's personal name, although it occurred nearly 7,000 times in her Bible (the *Bungotai*, old classic version). Instead of answering her many questions, her clergyman had told her to "just believe." She obtained a copy of *The Watchtower* (published monthly in Japanese since May 1951) that Gladys had placed with her next-door neighbor. Impressed by what she read, she searched out Gladys. Regarding this experience, Gladys later said: "When she saw the Bible's answers to her questions, these touched her heart. She immediately came to

Japan

the Congregation Book Study. There she heard the service announcements for the following day and expressed her desire to go too. We tried to slow her down by telling her that she needed to study a little first. She said: 'OK, I'll study, but I want to go in the service too!' She did, and she put in more than 50 hours that first month! Within a year she was baptized and started pioneering, and later she served as a productive special pioneer. At 80 years of age, she is still in the pioneer service."

Jehovah Made It Grow

Five missionary sisters who were assigned to Osaka in 1951

were pleased that many people came right to the missionary home for their studies. But these new missionaries had a hard time distinguishing one Japanese person from another. Lena Winteler, from Switzerland, says: "When the people arrived, all five of us would go in a group and let them choose their correct conductor." Endeavoring to imitate Japanese custom, the missionaries would line up slippers to be used by the people who came to the home, but the missionaries did not know the difference between slippers for guests and slippers for the bathroom. One day a student took Lena aside and explained: "We don't put out toilet slippers for guests." The missionaries gradually learned.



Grace (top) and Gladys Gregory, from Gilead School's 11th class



*Margrit Winteler (right, Gilead's 23rd class)
joined her sister Lena (15th class) in Japan*

From time to time, the missionary brothers in Kobe would visit Osaka to give some assistance to the five single sisters there. Only a handful of publishers were in all Osaka at the time. On one occasion, Lloyd Barry joined some of the Osaka missionaries at an open-air operatic concert at the large baseball stadium at Koshien. The comment was made: 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could fill this stadium with an assembly some day!' A seeming impossibility.

Toward the end of 1994, however, Brother Barry, now a member of the Governing Body, in Brooklyn, was invited to give the dedication talk at the newly built Hyogo Assembly Hall, serving the 52 congregations in the Kobe area. It was a delightful meeting, attended by a number of the original Japanese publishers there. A much larger assembly was planned for the following day. And where was this to be held? In no other place than the Koshien Baseball Stadium. More than 40,000 assembled, and what an orderly group they were! Many also attended in 40 other locations throughout Japan, being tied in by telephone. Thus the total of those present came to over

254,000—even more than attended the huge New York assembly of 1958. How wonderfully Jehovah has 'made it grow' in Japan!—1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

Early in 1951 a missionary home was opened in Yokohama. This city also proved to be a most fruitful field. The original home servant, Gordon Dearn, now a widower, continues his full-time service at the Tokyo branch at Ebina. Today there are 114 congregations in Yokohama, and the expansion continues, with the local brothers taking up where the missionaries left off.

In 1952 a missionary home was also established in the city of Kyoto. Missionaries from Osaka and Kobe were transferred to Kyoto to join the zealous group of new missionaries there. In April 1954, Lois Dyer and Molly Heron were also reassigned from Kobe to Kyoto.

In Kyoto, there are about a thousand temples, almost one on every corner. The city had not been bombed during the war, in order to preserve the temples. Lois remembers: "While there, we met Shozo Mima, a grocery wholesaler who was recovering at home from a lengthy illness. Although a zealous Buddhist, he told me that he wanted to know about the true God. It was very easy to start a Bible study with him. Later his wife and daughters also studied, and the whole family came into the truth. Congenial Shozo became a spiritual pillar in the Kyoto Congregation."

Margrit Winteler, from Switzerland, joined her older sister Lena in Kyoto. She found out that in this new assignment she had to get used to the unspoken word as well as the spoken. For example, a man who expected his wife to make the decision whether to accept literature might simply wave his pinkie (little finger) to indicate that she was not at home. The

wife, on the other hand, might hold up her thumb, which represented the husband, and say he was not at home. Margrit came to realize that when the people in Kyoto simply kept looking at the magazines being offered, carefully turning a page at a time, they were actually refusing them by body language and wanted her to realize it without their having to say so. By no means, though, were all the replies, whether by words or by body language, negative. Today there are 39 thriving congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kyoto.

Dealing With Cold Winters and a New Language

When more missionaries, including Adeline Nako and her partner Lillian Samson, arrived in Japan from Hawaii in 1953, they were assigned to the cold northern city of Sendai. Night-time temperatures would drop to 23 degrees Fahrenheit. Don and Mabel Haslett had established the new missionary home there the previous October and had been joined by Shinichi and Masako Tohara. Having been raised in the tropics, the Hawaiians found the cold winters in Sendai a challenge. They came to be known as the "fresh frozen Hawaiians."

Lillian recalls: "For the first time in our lives, we learned how to chop wood for a cookstove. There was heat only in the kitchen, so we would try to warm our beds with a *yutanpo*, a metal Japanese bed warmer. During the day, we would buy *ishi-yakiimo* (stone-baked sweet potatoes), place them in our pockets as hand warmers, and then eat them for lunch."

It was not only the cold that presented problems, however. Until the missionaries learned to read Japanese characters, there were awkward situations. Adeline has not yet forgotten the day when, because of her inability to read Japanese, she pushed an emergency fire alarm, thinking it was a red door-

bell. People came pouring out of their apartments to see what had happened. She got a good scolding for that one.

The memories of those missionaries, however, include much more than personal experiences during their early years in Japan. For them, the many thousands of their Japanese brothers and sisters and the events that they have shared together all have a place in their "family album." We invite you to examine the pages of that album as we look back on other events that have contributed to the growth of the theocratic society in Japan.

Special Pioneers Open New Fields

The activity of special pioneers has been a significant factor in spreading the Kingdom message to the far corners of the land. Some of these were personally trained by the missionaries, and they show the same caliber of zeal for Jehovah. In parallel with the work of the missionaries, these Japanese special pioneers were sent out to smaller cities and towns. Many of the early special pioneers, though baptized only a short time when appointed, have shown exceptional devotion and endurance.

After having been baptized for only a year and four months, Hisako Wakui received her appointment. She and her partner, Takako Sato, have been special pioneers together since 1957. Between them, in nine assignments, they have helped over 80 persons to become baptized Witnesses.

Regarding the results from Jehovah's blessing on one of the first Bible studies that she conducted, Hisako reports: "She was a zealous churchgoer, but she said, 'If it is a Bible study, I can do it every day.' Upon learning that God's name is Jehovah and that he is the Father of Jesus, she quit the church and was soon out in the field service." Her zeal did not wane when she moved to a very cold area where there was no

congregation. Today, her husband and four children are all in the truth. The three boys serve as elders, and her daughter is a special pioneer.

When they were in Tsuru, Yamanashi Prefecture, Hisako and Takako found that growth was very slow in coming. Only four or five attended the meetings. The circuit overseer thought that perhaps they should be reassigned to more fruitful territory, but the sisters were not eager to leave Tsuru. They strongly felt that, since Jehovah had sent them to Tsuru, he must have sheep there. So the circuit overseer said: "If 18 people come to the public discourse this weekend, I will convey to the Society your desire to remain in this assignment." The pioneers did everything that they Scripturally could to get people to the Sunday meeting. Amazingly, 19 attended! The next week, the attendance went back to four or five, but the pioneers were able to continue their work in that territory. Today the Tsuru Congregation has a fine group of publishers and a beautiful Kingdom Hall.

Kazuko Kobayashi is another special pioneer who has served for 40 years in opening new territories. When Pauline Green, a missionary in Kyoto, first met her, Kazuko had been seeking to find out the purpose of life. Pauline showed her Ecclesiastes 12:13, and this satisfied Kazuko. She concluded that the missionary's way of life most closely matched the way a Christian should live, so she made such a life her own goal. When appointed as a special pioneer, she had been baptized for only three years. But she soon began to experience Jehovah's loving hand of protection in her special service, and she saw good results. Kazuko also understood how people in the rural villages felt—that fear of what others might think influences their decisions. How did she deal with this? She says: "I made efforts to become their friend. I love people, and wher-

ever I went I tried to remember that Jehovah loves them too. Then it was easy to become their friend."

In March 1971, the branch office sent out more new special pioneers to preach in isolated territories. Typical were two young sisters just out of their teens, Akemi Idei (now Ohara), adopted daughter of Miyo Idei, and Kazuko Yoshioka (now Tokumori), who were assigned to Kaga in central Japan. Until then, they had served under the protective "umbrella" of their parents and their congregations. "Now, things were different," recalls Kazuko. "We were the only ones declaring the good news in the territory to which we were assigned." To help break the ice with the people, who were suspicious of strangers, they practiced introducing themselves in the local dialect, using exactly the same intonation as the people used. Among those who accepted the truth were three young men on a track team. Kazuko relates that when the three started to go out in the field ministry, she had a hard time keeping up with them. They had been long-distance runners, and they would literally run from one farmhouse to the next.

As zealous special pioneers witnessed in formerly unassigned territories, the number of congregations and isolated groups increased, reaching the 1,000 mark in January 1976.

Developments in Okinawa

Progress was being made in the Okinawan islands too. Those islands, with a population of 1,200,000, had come under the administration of the United States following World War II. The Okinawans are by nature quiet, patient, warm, and friendly. Our Okinawan brothers and sisters also display the fine qualities of endurance and zeal for the truth.

Okinawa was assigned to the Japan branch, and Lloyd Barry, by then branch overseer in Tokyo, paid his first visit there in 1953. He was met by four brothers, all reconstruction workers from the Philippines, who immediately drove him to the



Don Haslett and Lloyd Barry at Tokyo Bethel Home, 1953

U.S. Army's correction center, where three soldiers were being detained. These young men had taken their stand for Bible truth but were rather tactless. They went to extremes. For example, they kept the entire facility awake by loudly singing Kingdom songs late into the night. They were helped to be more balanced. Incidentally, the prison chaplain remarked that, as he viewed matters, Christ's Kingdom was a thousand years away. One of these young men later served as a member of the Brooklyn Bethel family; all three became responsible servants in the Christian congregation. During that visit a meeting was held with more than 100 islanders assembled in a Quonset hut.

A native Okinawan, Yoshi Higa, was in attendance at that meeting. In Okinawa it is the custom to dispose of the remains of the dead in a large cave, whose entrance is shaped like a womb—indicating that those who die return to the place from which they came. Yoshi had found shelter in such



Japanese special pioneers who have served for 40 years (left to right): Takako Sato, Hisako Wakui, Kazuko Kobayashi



a cave during the terrible Battle of Okinawa in World War II. Looking at the human remains there, she had become convinced that the dead were really dead. On studying the Bible, she readily accepted its teaching on the condition of the dead and the wonderful resurrection hope.

Yoshi became the first Okinawan publisher and the first regular pioneer. The local radio station had been eager to broadcast Bible discussions, but Christendom's clergy were lax in providing programs. However, they found that Yoshi was most willing to fill the gap. For several months she read articles from *Watchtower* magazines.

Soon it was possible to arrange a circuit assembly for some 12 new local publishers, the program parts being handled in Japanese, alternately by Adrian Thompson and by Lloyd Barry. The work expanded quickly, the numbers of publishers and pioneers increasing by leaps and bounds.



| Okinawa branch, 1979

Yoshi Higa entered the pioneer work in May 1954. Through 43 years of faithful pioneer ministry, she has helped over 50 individuals to learn the truth, many of her first “letters of recommendation” coming from the local Shuri church. (2 Cor. 3:1-3) She continues in the pioneer work in Ginowan.

Another very enthusiastic Witness is Mitsuko Tomoyori, a widow, who began pioneering with her daughter Masako in 1957 in Shuri, the ancient capital of Okinawa. Mitsuko’s eyes still sparkle as she tells about the past 40 years that she has enjoyed in the pioneer service and about the many people whom she has helped to embrace the truth that leads to everlasting life.

In 1965, the Watch Tower Society established a branch in Okinawa, with Hawaiian missionary Shinichi Tohara as branch overseer. (He is of Okinawan descent.) This arrangement continued even after the islands were transferred back to Japanese government control in 1972. When the Branch Committee arrangement was put into effect in February 1976, Shinichi Tohara, James Linton (an Australian missionary), and

Chukichi Une (a native Okinawan and Gilead graduate) were appointed to serve on the committee.

Perseverance Needed

During the 1976 service year, in an effort to expand the preaching of the good news, special pioneers were assigned to more of the islands under the Okinawa branch. On some of the islands, there was good response. On others it took many years before custom, superstition, and strong family ties could be surmounted. A great deal of perseverance was needed by the special pioneers assigned to work there. Because of the local distrust of outsiders, it was often nearly impossible for them to find accommodations despite there being many vacant houses. Sometimes the only house available was where someone had committed suicide. But, because of local superstition, such a house could not be used as a meeting place.

Nevertheless, with much perseverance, the pioneers began to see fruitage. On the island of Tokuno Shima, a family came to the public talk during the circuit overseer’s visit. The father had an active interest in the very popular local sport of bull fighting. (Bulls are pitted against each other to determine which one has the greater pushing strength.) He had a prize bull trained for the contests. But his interest had been aroused in the Bible through a daughter to whom Jehovah’s Witnesses had talked in Japan. The family accepted a Bible study, and he, his wife, his daughter, and three sons became dedicated Witnesses. Two neighboring families also came into the truth. This group became a real beehive of activity. There is now a congregation of 49 publishers and 16 pioneers on this small island.

On the remote southern island of Ishigaki, the publishers were surprised to have a young man, a well-known boxer, search them out and ask for a Bible study. He had studied

previously in Yokohama, but he had been afraid to face up to the responsibility to which Bible truth pointed. In order to avoid it, he had fled to Iriomote, a sparsely populated island where he felt sure there would be none of Jehovah's Witnesses. Before long, though, he came across Watch Tower publications and was stunned when he realized that Jehovah's Witnesses had preached there too. He concluded that there was no way he could run away from before Jehovah. (Compare Jonah 1:3.) Using the address of a publisher that was written in one of the publications, he searched out the Witnesses on the nearby island of Ishigaki. In a short time, he became a dedicated Witness and an enthusiastic pioneer.

Following a zone visit by Milton Henschel in September 1980, Okinawa again came under the Japan branch. Brother Tohara and his wife, and Brother Une and his wife, continued in the full-time service in Okinawa, and Brother and Sister Linton returned to the district work on the larger islands of Japan.

Traveling Brothers Play an Important Role

Because of the self-sacrificing spirit of the traveling overseers and their wives, they have been able to contribute in many ways to the growth and maturity of the Japanese congregations. Their service has an upbuilding effect on the congregations. The brothers realize that these overseers and their wives have left 'houses and mother and father for the sake of the good news.'—Mark 10:29.

When circuit overseers visited the congregations in the earlier days, there was very little housing available that afforded any real privacy. But their cheerfully accepting whatever was available endeared them to the brothers. Keiichi Yoshida recalls with humor a time as recently as 1983 when he and

his wife stayed with a single brother and his unbelieving family in a large farmhouse in the northern part of Honshu. He says: "We were warmly greeted by the family and shown to our quarters—a room with a large Buddhist altar. As we were retiring, without warning, Grandpa, in his night wear, opened the sliding door and, without saying a word to us, rang the altar bell, lit the incense, said his prayers, and walked out the opposite side of the room. Others followed. We spent the entire week with the excitement of not knowing when or from which direction the altar visits would come. But we spent an enjoyable week with this kind and hospitable family."

The traveling overseers, at present numbering 209, have an average of about 20 years in the full-time service. The majority of them were formerly special pioneers. This background enables them to give fine training in door-to-door witnessing. Their enthusiasm for the field service has contributed much to the excellent pioneer spirit in Japan.

Some of these circuit overseers have helped motivate individuals and families to move to areas where there has been a greater need for Kingdom Witnesses. Others have given special attention to unbelieving mates, with the result that some have become baptized Witnesses. Youths too have been helped to reach out for spiritual goals as a result of the special personal interest shown them and the example set by the traveling brothers.

Missionaries Continue to Share

By the 1970's the missionaries were being assigned to smaller cities. In these places people tended to be more conservative and tradition-bound, so the disciple-making work progressed more slowly. Where there were congregations, the missionaries helped the local brothers to gain experience by

letting them take the lead. Akita, Gifu, Kofu, Kawaguchi, Kochi, Nagano, Wakayama, and Yamagata were some of the cities where they served.

Patiently they endeavored to help local Witnesses appreciate the wisdom of embracing the full range of Bible truth. (Heb. 6:1) Masao Fujimaki, presiding overseer of a congregation in Kofu, recalls when the congregation was studying the book *Making Your Family Life Happy*. An elderly brother had trouble with the instruction for husbands to express affection openly for their wives. He said: "This is of course impossible for those of us educated before the war." Privately Richard Bailey, one of the missionaries in the congregation, kindly helped him, saying: "The truths we study should transcend national background or generation; they always apply and are always beneficial. If we minimize any part of the truth, we may become emboldened to reject even more important aspects of it." (Luke 16:10) The brother got the point, and after that he was seen sitting happily with his wife—a new experience for them.

In other ways too, local Witnesses benefited by associating with the missionaries. One sister had this to say: "They were cheerful and knew how to serve God with joy. I also learned from them the importance of adhering to principles based on love rather than making rules."—Deut. 10:12; Acts 13:52.

The missionaries helped many to feel more keenly that they were part of a worldwide brotherhood. Kazuko Sato, who first studied in Tokyo with Melba Barry, remembers how she was strengthened while pioneering in a rural area where there was much religious animosity. Feeling lonely, she wrote to the missionaries with whom she had associated in her previous congregation: "I am preaching all alone." A letter came back with messages from several missionaries, some pains-



Heading out for
winter witnessing
in Hokkaido

takingly written in Japanese phonetics, saying: "Kazuko, you are not alone! Listen, and from beyond the apple orchard you will hear the sound of feet, the feet of zealous and faithful brothers from around the world."—Compare Revelation 7:9, 10.

At present, 41 missionaries still serve from five missionary homes in Japan—in Yamagata, Iwaki, Toyama, and two in Tokyo. In addition, nine missionaries serve in the traveling work, and nine at Bethel in Ebina. These missionaries have set a fine example in loyalty to Jehovah and his organization. By word and by deed, they have contributed to a 'widening out' of viewpoint and a deepening of understanding of the truth on the part of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan.—2 Cor. 6:13; Eph. 3:18.



Top:
Adeline Nako
Bottom:
Lillian Samson

Summer Activities to Cover Unassigned Territories

Others also shared in spreading the good news to the outlying cities and towns. In 1971 an invitation was extended to regular pioneers to work in unassigned territories during the summer months. Then in 1974, a temporary-special-pioneer arrangement for the three summer months was introduced. Every year, 50 temporary special pioneers were assigned to 25 different areas, and large amounts of literature were placed.

By 1980, there remained only about 7,800,000 persons living in territories not assigned to any congregation in Japan. So instead of assigning temporary special pioneers, the branch office invited congregations, groups of regular pioneers, and families to work in the unassigned territories during the summer months. For the Japanese Witnesses, who feel more at ease when doing everything together, this was an enjoyable prospect.

The results were heartwarming. In 1986, a publisher who was working in an unassigned territory approached a house on a mountain in the village of Miwa in Ibaraki Prefecture and was welcomed by a housewife who had in her hands the books *Making Your Family Life Happy* and *My Book of Bible Stories*. She had obtained those books on an earlier occasion and had read them many times. She had looked in vain for a Bible in bookstores and so was pleased when she heard that a Christian family was going to be moving into the village. A Bible study was promptly started, and now the whole family is in the truth.

Gradually the remaining towns and villages were assigned to nearby congregations.

Specialized Instruction for the Elders

As the preaching of the good news spread out, the number and the size of the congregations also grew. Often there was

only one qualified brother, maybe two, to take the lead in a congregation. Few of these had received much training in congregation matters. But following the introduction of the elder arrangement on October 1, 1972, newly appointed elders were invited to the branch office at Numazu and were given two weeks of specialized instruction.

This school was a real milestone. The instructors tried to help the brothers see the importance of showing genuine love and of being balanced and reasonable in dealing with fellow Witnesses. (2 Cor. 1:24) They also emphasized the importance of looking after one's own family spiritually. (1 Tim. 3:4; 5:8) This was not usually stressed in Oriental households.

The brothers were eager to take home all the instruction they could from the school. However, many were inclined to learn by rote as they had done during their formal school days. Takashi Abe, one of the instructors, recalls: "The students would sit up till late at night laboriously writing out notes from the day's discussions. We tried to discourage them from taking a lot of notes and making rules but, rather, urged them to use their thinking ability and to apply Bible principles."—Rom. 12:1; Heb. 5:14.

Many brothers attended this school at great personal sacrifice. Some traveled from snowy Hokkaido, 800 miles to the north; others, from subtropical Okinawa, 1,100 miles to the south. Included were ones who faced the prospect of having to find new secular employment upon returning to their families. In 1977 two-day school sessions were held in various localities throughout the country. This made it much easier for the brothers to attend.

Dealing With Family Opposition

Becoming a Christian in Japan is not without its challenges. "Especially in the rural territories, new ones receive

much opposition from relatives living in the community," explains Hiroko Eto, who has been a pioneer for 37 years. "The relatives are embarrassed to have a family member different from others in the community, and fear of man is very strong."

Hiroko's mother, Yuriko Eto, had loved the Bible even before coming in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. But, in 1954, when they helped her to appreciate God's purpose not only to take a little flock of faithful Christians to heaven but also to make the earth a paradise filled with happy servants of Jehovah, she was eager to share this good news with others. She and her children have patiently helped many to overcome fear of man in order to gain Jehovah's approval.

Regarding her efforts to help a sincere woman, Hiroko had the following experience. A housewife who started to study faced opposition from her mother-in-law, with whom she and her husband lived. Not wanting to disrupt the family peace, the housewife stopped the study. "I would watch for her on the road and encourage her to be kind to her mother-in-law," Hiroko says, "and to show by example the good effect of studying the Bible. She tactfully asked her husband questions about what she was studying and gradually got him interested. At first her husband told her: 'In a rural area like this, it is impossible to be a Christian.' However, love for Jehovah helped them to overcome much opposition." Now they and their oldest son are baptized. The husband, a ministerial servant, conducts the Congregation Book Study at his home, and his mother surprised everybody by attending the meeting when he gave his first public talk.

Often the opposition comes from marriage mates. Some husbands oppose because of jealousy or because they grew up in surroundings where male chauvinism is common.

Japan

Yuriko Eto |



When newly married Keiko Ichimaru started to study the Bible in the early 1970's, her husband, Hiroyuki, strongly opposed her and told her not to attend the meetings. "I just couldn't stand the thought of playing second fiddle to religion," Hiroyuki later explained. Keiko loved her husband, so she tactfully asked him to check whether what she was studying was good. He decided to study the Bible on his own but could not understand it. Finally he asked his wife if he could sit in on her study. They both became baptized Witnesses. Eventually, Hiroyuki became a regular pioneer and now is an elder.

After the work of Kingdom proclamation began in Chikugo in 1971, Mayuki Sakamoto was one of the first to accept the Bible's message. Her husband, Toyota, opposed when his wife and young son began to attend the meetings in a neighboring city. Determined to stop her, Toyota intensified his opposition. For 14 years, even after she got baptized in 1973, he continued his opposition. One time, he pointed a gun at her and shouted: "I'm going to kill you if you don't quit!" Her calm response intrigued Toyota. He wondered what made her so firm.

Through all of that, Mayuki sought to show love for her husband. She never gave up trying to help him learn the truth. (1 Pet. 3:1, 2) One day, Toyota, annoyed by the fact that his wife and his son were pioneering while he worked secularly, went to his workplace and quit his job. This was a major move on his part because Japanese men generally view their work as

almost sacred. Toyota hoped that his wife and his son would feel sorry for him. But when he came home and told them what he had done, they clapped their hands. This made Toyota think. Soon he started to study. In time he joined them in the pioneer work, and he now serves as a Christian elder.

At the beginning of the 1970's, men attending our meetings for the first time would often remark that only women and children were present. But since then, tens of thousands of men have made excellent spiritual progress. Now the organization has a solid infrastructure of spiritually mature men who are caring for all the organizational needs. Among them are some who were opposers back in the 1970's.

The Pioneers Go to School

Because of the high percentage of pioneer ministers (25 to 30 percent) in each congregation in the 1970's, there were many enrollees for the Pioneer Service School, which began in January 1978 in Japan. This schooling has contributed greatly to the maturity of the congregations.

The first ones invited to the school were special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers along with their wives. Shigeru Yoshioka, one of the original instructors, recalls: "It was a big help to have these experienced pioneers in the early classes. What we learned from the comments and experiences of these mature ministers, we were able to share with later classes."

Beginning in February 1980, the Pioneer Service School was held in each circuit. Circuit overseers and other mature brothers who had attended the course served as instructors. In the eight years following the school's inauguration, there was, on an average, a 22-percent yearly increase in the number of regular pioneers, compared with a 12-percent increase in pub-

lishers. Now, most circuits regularly have two or more pioneer classes of from 25 to 30 students each year.

Most of the pioneers attending this school are still quite new in the truth, but as a result of the schooling, they gain confidence and skill in their ministry and they learn invaluable lessons in Christian living. One pioneer put it this way: "Until now, service, child training, Christian personality, and Bible knowledge were all mixed up in the drawer of my mind. Through the ten-day school course, though, I was able to get them all sorted out into their proper places." As of September 1997, 3,650 classes had been held, with 87,158 pioneers attending.

All Sorts of People Have Responded

People from a wide variety of backgrounds make up the colorful fabric of the theocratic organization in Japan. Toshiaki Niwa is a mild-mannered elder in a congregation in Yokohama. But at the end of World War II, he was being trained to pilot an *Ohka*, a rocket glider, for a kamikaze suicide attack against U.S. naval vessels. Such service was viewed as evidence of devotion to the emperor. However, the war ended before he had an opportunity to die for his country. Later his wife studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. When Toshiaki learned that the Witnesses had maintained strict neutrality during the war, he too became interested. In 1977 he joined his wife in sharing with others the Bible's message of peace.

In the entertainment world too, we have found people who gladly changed their life-style to become praisers of Jehovah. Yoshihiro Nagasaki had formed a Dixieland jazz band with several college friends. They asked a man who had taught them jazz to become their band leader. This man, Yoshimasa



A happy pioneer family starting out for field service

Kasai, one of Japan's foremost jazz musicians, had in the meantime come in contact with "Trummy" Young, a trumpeter visiting from Hawaii. "Right from that day, lessons started, not in music, but in the truth," reminisces Yoshihiro, who now serves on the Branch Committee. "We were not interested, no, not in the least, but because he was so enthusiastic and we did not want to lose him as our band leader, we listened to him." They even agreed to study. The turning point for Yoshihiro, however, was when he attended a circuit assembly in April 1966. At the assembly, a high school student whom he had previously met invited Yoshihiro to join her in the field service. She witnessed from the Bible, and he gave handbills to the householders. "For the first time, the truth really began to mean something to me," he recalls. After attending that assembly, he went in the service every day and made rapid progress. Four out of six members of that band are now active Witnesses.

Shinji Sato was a priest at the famous Izumo Shrine in Shimane Prefecture, one of the most important Shinto shrines in Japan. He also served as an instructor of the Izumo Oyashi-

rokyo sect. Though he had served as a Shinto priest for almost 20 years, he had become disillusioned with the injustice and the lack of love that he observed among the priests. He had come to realize that the Shinto gods offered no salvation, and he began a search for the true God. He started to read the Bible, but he still had many questions.

It was then that, on the street, he met an acquaintance whom he knew to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. So he asked questions that he felt would identify the true religion: "Is your religion free from politics? Is yours a nonprofit organization? Do your teachings come from God rather than from men? Do the people at your headquarters practice what they preach?" Then he asked: "If your organization meets these conditions, will you be kind enough to teach me the Bible?" What a relief it was for him when he finally broke free from Babylon the Great! (Rev. 18:4) He says: "Now, being one of Jehovah's Witnesses and teaching others the way of the true God, I feel just as it is recorded in Proverbs: 'The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it.'"—Prov. 10:22.

Famous artists and musicians, a comic writer, a sumo wrestler, and professional bicyclists have all left their past glories. Professionals such as physicians, a noted calligrapher, and lawyers have seen the light of truth and are using their skills to promote Kingdom interests. Former gangsters, hoodlums, policemen, and politicians are peacefully dwelling together with their spiritual brothers. (Isa. 11:6-9) Buddhist monks, Shinto priests, and a founder of her own religion have come out of Babylon the Great. (Rev. 18:2) Schoolteachers, prominent Japanese businessmen, and artisans with various skills are working together on theocratic projects. Jehovah's organization has grown to include all sorts of people who have

been helped to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." —Eph. 4:24.

Enthusiastic Pioneer Spirit

In spite of the shrinking territory and growing religious apathy, there continues to be great enthusiasm for the pioneer service. In the spring, when large numbers of auxiliary pioneers join the pioneer ranks, the total of all pioneers swells to more than 50 percent of the publishers. In March 1997, 108,737 were serving as pioneers.

A question often asked is, "Why are there so many pioneers in Japan?" There appear to be several factors. The foundation for postwar growth in Japan was laid by zealous missionaries, and appreciative students endeavor to imitate those who teach them. (Luke 6:40) As a result, a heritage of zeal for the ministry was passed on to the next generation of disciples. Also, it is generally true that Japanese homes are quite modest, thus requiring little time for upkeep, and for the most part, lives are traditionally kept simple. This can make it easier for housewives to give priority to spiritual interests. (Matt. 6:22, 33) Additionally, the climate is generally moderate in Japan, and there have been favorable political and economic conditions in the country.

Cultural background and national traits appear to be still another factor. On the whole, the Japanese people are obedient to directions, responsive to encouragement from the group, and enthusiastic in their work. Touching on this, Shin-ichi Tohara, a Japanese-American who came to Japan as one of the first postwar missionaries, said: 'Kamikaze pilots died for the emperor by aiming their aircraft at the enemy warships. If the Japanese are that faithful to human lords, what would

they do if they found the true Lord, Jehovah?" Yes, a keen desire to please Jehovah is behind every application to pioneer.

Parents Who Pioneer

Who are the pioneers? A majority are sisters, most of whom are married and have children. Many pioneer without spiritual support from unbelieving husbands and relatives.

"When I started to pioneer, my youngest daughter was just a few months old," says Mutsuko of Fujisawa, who has been pioneering for over 20 years. "My husband, working for a bank, usually did not get home until after we got back from our evening meetings. Even though it required a great deal of effort, I wanted to continue my pioneering." She was rewarded when all three of her children, upon graduating from high school, joined her in the pioneer service. After many years of opposition and then indifference, her husband too began to change. What a joy it was to Mutsuko when, in the congregation, she listened to her son deliver the first half of a public talk, followed by her husband, who gave the rest!

Pioneering fathers too exercise a fine influence. Hisataka knew that his father had quit his position as a teacher of data processing so that he could pioneer. During Hisataka's summer vacation from grade school, his father invited him to accompany him on his job, delivering milk early in the morning. "About the time the eastern sky became filled with glorious hues of orange," Hisataka recalls, "Father expressed to me his intimate feelings about how rewarding it is to serve Jehovah whole-souled. Seeing him joyfully toil for Jehovah moved me more than any words possibly could." Hisataka now serves as a member of the Ebina Bethel family.

Saved From *Karosshi*

"If you are dying to work, join a Japanese company," some have said in jest. This is because a typical Japanese family man

is extremely devoted to his work and spends many long hours at his place of employment. However, many a father who was once working himself to *karoshi* (death from overwork) is now dedicated, not to a secular company, but to Jehovah God and has joined his family in the pioneer service.

Shunji from the Kobe area, who used to work for a major construction enterprise, says: "What was driving me was attachment to my business and a desire for success. When work sites were far from home, I returned to my family only for short weekends at best." What changed all of that? He answers: "I was afraid of death, worrying about what might happen to my family if I should die. I was puzzled as to why my wife and son were always so joyful about going out preaching." While Shunji was helping the local congregation with technical details involved in building their Kingdom Hall, an elder encouraged him to have a Bible study. He did, and now he shares with his family the joy of regular pioneer service. He also enjoys serving on a Regional Building Committee.

It takes real faith and a self-sacrificing spirit for family heads to leave what has been viewed as assured lifelong company employment and then to work at somewhat unstable part-time jobs in order to have the time needed for the pioneer ministry. The father of Mitsunobu from Chiba changed his job. At the large company where he used to work and where his former colleagues had moved into managerial positions, he went from office to office, collecting wastepaper for recycling. With true appreciation, Mitsunobu says: "How I thank my parents, who personally taught me how to appreciate the treasure of pioneer service, thus helping me make it my own career!" Those who make such adjustments in life have the conviction that financial rewards are only temporary and that spiritual treasures are of far greater value.—Matt. 6:19-21.

Take Care to Live Longer!

Serious health problems have also been surmounted by some who earnestly desire to do their utmost in Jehovah's service. "At best, you will live to see your son grow up. Never overwork yourself, but take every care to live longer." So said the doctor who diagnosed Yaeko Ono's health problems involving her heart. Her son was then three years old. "How can I lead the rest of my life without having any regrets?" she asked herself as she went home from the hospital. By the time she arrived at home, she had resolved to become a pioneer. When her relatives learned about this, they were concerned, but that did not change her mind. She says: "I started pioneering in September 1978. I did not know then that I was pregnant. My mother became seriously ill. My own condition worsened. Yet, Jesus' words gave me courage: 'With faith the size of a mustard grain a mountain can be transferred.' (Matt. 17:20) I decided to do my best."

After 17 years, Yaeko said: "I feel that Jehovah's comforting arms have been around me." Problems sometimes almost overwhelmed her, but she would recount Jehovah's blessings, and this helped her to persevere. Influenced by her zeal, her husband began to study. And her joy was capped when, in answer to her fervent prayers, he became her pioneer partner!

This is the caliber of pioneers in Japan. Many more could be mentioned—ones such as the brother who was paralyzed from his neck down but was a constant source of encouragement to others as he served as a pioneer chiefly through correspondence, the sister who was born right at the turn of the century and spent her final 13 years till 1994 as a pioneer in a snowbound area, and the blind elder who moved to a town to pioneer and help the small congregation there. All of these, like the faithful witnesses of old, though having physical weaknesses, "were made powerful" by God to do his will.—Heb. 11:32-34.

New World Translation Into Japanese

Worldwide, use of the Bible itself in the public ministry has been an identifying mark of Jehovah's Witnesses. In Japan the publishers earnestly desired to have an accurate, easy-to-read Bible in modern Japanese. Many had struggled with the classic version. In spite of its beautiful expressions and consistent use of God's sacred name, it was hard for those educated after the war to understand its antiquated syntax. Therefore, in January 1970 the brothers at the branch were absolutely delighted to receive a letter from headquarters authorizing the translating of the Greek portion of the *New World Translation* into Japanese.

Three years later, at the "Divine Victory" International Assembly at Osaka, a crowd of 31,263 applauded with uninhibited delight when Lyman Swingle, of the Governing Body, announced the release of the Japanese edition of the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. During the nine years following its release, 1,140,000 copies were distributed, approximately 75 times as many as the number of publishers at the time it was first published. That Bible was printed in the United States, but the day was not far off when such printing and binding would be done in our facilities in Japan.

Could Meeting Places Be Improved?

As the number of congregations continued to multiply throughout Japan, it became increasingly obvious that suitable meeting places were sorely needed. Prior to the 1970's, very few congregations owned their meeting place. In fact, there were only nine Kingdom Halls dedicated during the entire decade of the 1960's. Most congregations met in rented public halls or in private homes.

Recalling the inconvenience of these "portable meetings," Ai Nakamura, a sister in Hirosaki, says: "About 1963, we rented the city's Education Hall every weekend, and on the days the hall was closed, the congregation of about 15 came to my house for the meetings. We all had to help in carrying the magazines, literature, portable speaker's stand, and so forth, each time we had a meeting." The rented halls often had a strong tobacco smell as well as political or religious slogans and trappings. None of this matched the spiritual content of the Witnesses' meetings.

Molly Heron and Lois Dyer recall the hall they rented in Kyoto for meetings. It was a tatami, or straw mat, room on the second floor of a store. On either side, there were other rooms. On the one side, lessons on the samisen, a Japanese stringed instrument, were being given; on the other side, men were playing go, a Japanese checker game. "With that hullabaloo going on, we tried to conduct our *Watchtower* Study. It was what we had to use in those days," said Lois Dyer. Because we had no permanent meeting places as the other religious groups did, people were inclined to feel that we were merely an insignificant, temporary sect.

But by the mid-1970's, with the burgeoning numbers of new congregations, the brothers were searching out buildings that they could use as Kingdom Halls. By July 1974 the 646 congregations were using almost 200 Kingdom Halls throughout the country. Of these, 134 had been dedicated during the 1974 service year alone.

Although our brothers were limited financially, their ingenuity had no bounds. For example, on the island of Kyushu, the Kitakyushu Wakamatsu Congregation built a 1,400-square-foot Kingdom Hall on a plot that was provided by one of the local publishers. The congregation obtained

Because of exorbitant land prices, some Witnesses who owned property in the urban areas tore down their houses and rebuilt them with a Kingdom Hall on the first floor and their residence above.

Branch Construction Needed to Keep Abreast

Just as a child's clothing is continually outgrown, so too the facilities used by the Japan branch have repeatedly needed enlargement in order to care for the growth in the number of Witnesses in the country. In 1971, plans had been drawn up for a three-story factory and a five-story Bethel Home to be built in Numazu, with a clear view of beautiful Mount Fuji.

Originally, the factory buildings were used primarily to print the Japanese edition of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* In this regard, printing the special issue of *Awake!* October 8, 1972, on the newly installed 40-ton Tokyo Kikai rotary press was a milestone. It was the first magazine produced by our brothers at our printery in Numazu. But the pressroom crew had much to learn. At times they wondered whether they would ever be able to operate the press properly. "In those days," said a brother on the press crew, "some letters were so thickly inked that you could almost read them by touch!" Other characters were faint or patchy. However, as the brothers gained experience, the quality of printing steadily improved and the number of magazines placed in the field ministry increased.

When Brother Knorr spoke at the dedication program for those branch facilities in Numazu in 1973, the guests assembled in the empty space on the third floor of the new factory. Referring to what that floor would be used for, he said: "This empty space represents your faith. We believe that this space will be needed in a year or two. God's organization is moving forward, and at a very fast speed."



▲ Branch office in Tokyo, 1949-62



▲ Branch office in Tokyo, 1963-73



▲ Branch facilities in Numazu, 1972-82

used lumber and roofing tiles free of charge from five houses that were being demolished. They also obtained free wood from a public bath that was no longer in operation. The only building materials that they purchased were for the portions that would be visible when the hall was completed. From a nearby movie theater that went out of business, they obtained chairs free, repainted them, and installed them in the hall. After six months of hard work, the brothers had a fine Kingdom Hall.

As Brother Knorr had predicted, the space was soon used up. By 1974 two more buildings were needed—one for storing supplies and the other to house the workers. “This was the first construction that the Witnesses undertook all by themselves in Japan,” says Toshio Honma. “We were a bit concerned as to whether there would be enough experienced workers or not. God blessed us by providing people like Tadazo Fukayama, a construction overseer with over 30 years’ experience with a major building contractor.”

After years of work that had taken him away from home, Tadazo had just quit his job in order to spend more time with his family. So he had mixed feelings when he was asked to consider the possibility of coming to Numazu to supervise the Bethel expansion. Would he have to leave his family behind again? “No!” came the response from the branch. His wife and two sons, 18 and 20 years of age, were also invited.

Although the structures built at that time were relatively small compared with what was to come, this project gave the brothers experience and the confidence that with Jehovah’s help they could tackle even greater projects.

Native Brothers Take Heavier Responsibility

In April 1975, Lloyd Barry, who had been the branch overseer since 1952, left Japan to serve as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He had zealously shared in the work during the time that the theocratic organization grew from 8 publishers in 1949 to over 30,000 zealous Kingdom proclaimers. At his departure the oversight of the branch was entrusted to Toshio Honma, a native Japanese brother who was then serving as the factory overseer.

Regarding Brother Honma’s abilities, his assistant in the factory said: “Toshio wasn’t one to sit back and wait for someone to tell him what to do every step along the way. You could

give him a job and tell him, ‘This is the direction we’re going,’ and then he could take the ball and run. He was a good organizer and got people motivated.”

Another organizational change took place in February 1976. In unison with all the other branches throughout the world, the branch oversight in Japan was put under a committee of brothers rather than under a single branch overseer. The five initially appointed were Toshio Honma, the coordinator, Masataro Oda, Shigeo Ikehata, Kiichiro Tanaka, and James Mantz. This new arrangement was readily accepted by the Japanese brothers, as they were very familiar with the concept of group approach and consensus seeking in the decision-making process. One of the committee members later observed: “With the Branch Committee arrangement, the brothers look to a group of mature brothers as the representatives of the organization. This has the effect of directing the brothers’ attention to God’s organization rather than to an individual.” When a weighty decision must be made, this arrangement provides a group of spiritual men with varied backgrounds and abilities to consider it and to seek the direction of the holy spirit and of God’s Word.

In January 1983, Masataro Oda, who had served at Bethel since February 1960, became the coordinator. He replaced Brother Honma, who by this time had a two-year-old son to provide for. Others who have since served on the Branch Committee for varying periods of time include Ryosuke Fujimoto, Percy Iszlaub, Isamu Sugiura, Yoshihiro Nagasaki, Makoto Nakajima, Kenji Mimura, and Richard Bailey. Currently seven brothers serve on the Branch Committee. As the work has expanded, each of these brothers has humbly contributed his talents to the advancement of the interests of God’s Kingdom in this part of the world field.

“At this point, when we look back,” observes Brother

Oda, "we can see the divine wisdom in the committee arrangement. Since 1976, when the committee arrangement was inaugurated, the work has grown to where no one man could handle it alone. Jehovah gave the wisdom to the Governing Body to delegate the responsibility to many brothers, and in this way the smooth flow of the work has not been impeded."

Local Brothers Organize Conventions

Similarly, in the 1970's responsibility in connection with the organization of conventions began to be transferred to local Witnesses. One of the first Japanese district overseers to serve as convention overseer was Takashi Abe. He had gained valuable experience working along with missionaries such as Percy Iszlaub. Percy had been the convention overseer at the "Peace on Earth" International Assembly held at the Tokyo Korakuen Cycling Stadium in 1969. Two years later, Brother Abe served as the convention overseer for the national convention held at the same stadium. With the experience he had gained from the 1969 convention, the operation went smoothly. But heavier responsibility was to come.

In 1973, Brother Abe was appointed by the Society to be the convention overseer for a five-day "Divine Victory" International Assembly to be held in Osaka. An attendance of some 30,000 was expected, including 400 foreign delegates. His reaction? He recalls: "When I received the appointment letter, I became very ill and spent several days in bed, not even being able to sit up. I could only think about the challenge of organizing all the convention departments. How happy I was when, a few months before the convention, I received the booklet *Convention Organization* from the Society! By following Bible-based procedures, many problems were solved."

One of the immediate challenges was to arrange for enough seats for all the delegates. The convention was to



Toshio Honma, branch overseer in the mid-1970's

be held in the Festival Plaza in the Expo (1970) Memorial Park in Osaka, but the plaza had no seats or stage. The surrounding congregations were asked for information regarding folding chairs that could be rented for the convention. All the school principals in one city were contacted. Also, the president of the biggest electric-appliance maker in Japan was asked if his company was willing to rent out chairs for the convention. A company representative met with the convention overseer concerning this request. Although the company did not have extra

folding chairs that they could rent out, they willingly donated money for renting 5,000 chairs. Still more seats were needed. The solution? Make benches from scaffolding rented from a construction company. The benches were completed a few days before the convention, and an audience of 31,263 listened to the public talk. Because of their growing numbers, this was the last time that it was possible for all of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan and Okinawa to gather at one convention.

Five members of the Governing Body as well as the factory overseer from the world headquarters in Brooklyn attended the convention and encouraged the audience. Other delegates were on hand from Australia, Britain, Canada, Germany, Guatemala, Hawaii, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New



Branch Committee in 1997 (left to right): Richard Bailey, Shigeo Ikehata, Isamu Sugiura, Masataro Oda, Makoto Nakajima, Yoshihiro Nagasaki, Kenji Mimura

Guinea, and the United States, making the convention truly international.

Following that Osaka convention, more local brothers began to shoulder the responsibilities of convention organization. This made it easier for the brothers to balance the pre-convention work with their other responsibilities. In addition, traveling overseers could now concentrate on their assignment instead of devoting months before each convention to convention work.

1978 "Victorious Faith" International Conventions

The fourth international convention to be held in Japan was the five-day "Victorious Faith" Convention in 1978. This time, four convention sites were used in order to accommodate everyone. The main convention held in Osaka had a peak attendance of 31,785, including over 200 delegates from the

United States, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, as well as from other European, Asian, and South American countries. Three members of the Governing Body were on hand to take part in the convention program.

A fine spirit of cooperation had been cultivated over the years. The brothers had come to have full confidence that with Jehovah's help they could handle even major theocratic assignments.

From Bowling Alley to Assembly Hall

It became evident that in addition to having Kingdom Halls, the brothers needed reliable access to larger facilities for assemblies. By the early 1970's, many public facilities would not rent to religious groups, and contracts for gymnasiums could be canceled at the last minute because local sporting events had priority. Hirofumi Morohashi, who served as an assembly overseer in the Tokyo area for many years, recalls a particular incident that moved the brothers to start searching for their own Assembly Hall. He says: "In 1974 we made a deposit of 200,000 yen [\$700, U.S.] for the use of a hall in an amusement park in Oyama City for our circuit assembly. Later, the amusement park went bankrupt. We had a very difficult time in trying to recover the deposit as well as in finding another location for the assembly." Then Percy Iszlaub showed them pictures from Australia of an old weaving factory that had been converted into a beautiful Assembly Hall. The brothers in Tokyo felt that it was time for them to try something like that.

They located a bowling alley that was not in use. It was in Higashi-Matsuyama, on the outskirts of Tokyo. The owner of the building, having no knowledge of Jehovah's Witnesses, wrote to a family with whom he had stayed in the United States and asked them about Jehovah's Witnesses. He received

a very favorable reply telling him that Jehovah's Witnesses were the most trustworthy religious group in the United States. From then on things went very smoothly, and a contract was made.

Thus, in December 1976, the first Assembly Hall in Japan was completed. Meanwhile, another significant construction project was under way.

Jehovah Directs the Move

By the time the expanded Numazu facilities were dedicated in 1977, there were more than 40,000 publishers. The branch was directed to look for land 300 percent larger than the Numazu property. An old textile factory was located in Ebina, midway between Numazu and Tokyo, with about 18 acres of property. This was 1,600 percent larger than the Numazu site. But would the Governing Body approve such a move in a country where land prices were incredibly high? This property would cost more than twice the amount the United States paid Russia in purchasing Alaska back in 1867. For a while, there was no response from headquarters. "Then, suddenly, Brother Barry came from New York with Max Larson, the Society's Brooklyn factory overseer, to look at the plot, and we were given approval," says Toshio Honma. "In looking back now on the increases we have had in the past 20 years, we thank Jehovah for guiding us to purchase that huge property."

In January 1979 the construction of a two-floor factory, an office building, three residential buildings containing 161 Bethel rooms, a Kingdom Hall, and two smaller shop buildings was started. It was one of the largest construction projects ever undertaken by Jehovah's Witnesses anywhere in the world until that time.

Many family men with construction skills left their former jobs and moved their families to Ebina or surrounding cities in order to share in the building work. Yoshiaki Nishio was one of them. When he received his first invitation to share in the project as a plumber, he had just moved to a small town on Shikoku Island to serve where the need was greater. Since he had three small children, was then unemployed, and was low on funds, he at first declined. But when he received his third invitation by express mail, he felt that it was Jehovah telling him to go. He discussed the matter with his wife, who offered to support the family in his absence. "When I arrived at Bethel, I first realized that all five of us had been invited! It was incredible!" recalls Yoshiaki. The three children grew up to be pioneers, and one of them now serves as a member of the Bethel family at Ebina.

"Time and again we saw Jehovah open doors for us in connection with that construction," recalls James Mantz, chairman of the Construction Committee. "We had what seemed like insurmountable walls in front of us. The Kanagawa Prefecture government had some of the strictest pollution-control laws in the whole country. We were told not to drain one drop of wastewater into the canal that ran through the property. But Jehovah opened up the way for us. The former factory on the property used to cool its machinery with water from three wells. The water drained into a canal and this was used to irrigate the neighbors' crops. When the neighbors heard that this water supply was going to dry up, they went to the city office and complained, 'We are dependent on the water coming out of that property for our crops.' So the city officials reversed their decision and set a minimum amount of water that we had to put into the canal every day in order to supply the farmers. In addition to the purified wastewater that

went into the canal, we had to pump water from our wells to satisfy the farmers' needs."

With Frederick Franz, then president of the Watch Tower Society, present, the completed buildings were dedicated to Jehovah on May 15, 1982. Lloyd Barry and his wife, Melba, were also present and shared in the dedication program. As Brother Barry interviewed 14 of his fellow Gilead graduates who had been sent to Japan from the 11th class, the audience could sense his deep love for the Japanese brothers.

Progress in Quantity and Quality

The publishers continued to increase; so did the demand for literature. Even before the dedication of the facilities at Ebina, in October 1979 the branch took possession of its first web offset press. This press weighed 75 tons, was 64 feet long, and could produce 300 magazines per minute, in full color. Did that care for our needs?

"In 1981," recalls Brother Mantz, "we had a zone visit by Brother Jaracz. He noticed that we were running a double shift on our press and recommended that we ask for approval to purchase a second one. We were hesitant to request a second press because we felt that it was more economical to get by with one. However, within a month we received instructions from Brooklyn to order our second rotary offset press. At the time, we did not realize what was in store for us. But when it was delivered in May one year later, we immediately had to start production of the complete *New World Translation* in Japanese for release at the district conventions just *two months* away. At those conventions the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* was also to be released. So again we could see Jehovah's hand directing matters. We could never have produced our magazines, the Bible, and the book all on the one press."

A third press, a high-powered Mitsubishi, was installed in 1984. It had two webs and four color units in addition to an extra black unit; it was capable of producing 1,000 magazines a minute. At the time, it was the fastest press in the country and became the talk of secular printers. Ichiki Matsunaga, who was given special training to run the press, was thrilled to see it running at its maximum speed. "But," he said, "it is even more thrilling to contemplate the tremendous speed at which the printed message will be going out."

How could 60,000 magazines an hour be handled efficiently? Eventually, the brothers in the machine shop designed and built an electric conveyor system that transported the magazines from the press through a hydraulic pressing unit and a three-knife trimmer to the packing station. The operation overseer explains: "The press is fed a half-ton paper roll every 20 minutes, and at the other end of the line, the magazines are packed directly into labeled cartons, ready to be shipped." Within five minutes the paper goes from the roll through the press, the trimmer, and into the carton. This in-line system reduces the need for a number of workers and much storage space.

The high-quality printing made possible by this equipment, together with improvements in the artwork and paper quality, greatly enhanced the appeal of the magazines. The publishers enthusiastically offered them in the field ministry.

"Specialists in Array"

In keeping with the move to offset printing, the Society began to computerize its prepress operations. Were there Japanese Witnesses with sufficient technical background who could make themselves available to undertake this change? Yes! Yasuo Ishii, one of the technical pioneers in the field of computer science in Japan, had become a dedicated servant of

Jehovah. He had also shared his faith with his colleagues. As a result, six persons who were systems engineers and expert programmers had become baptized Witnesses. This entire group accepted the invitation to share in the Society's project, some as Bethelites and others as commuters. Recalling what had occurred, Toshio Honma, the Branch Committee coordinator at the time, said: "Jehovah had specialists in array for the very moment they were needed."

As to the computer to be used, the Brooklyn office had recommended leasing IBM's yet-to-be-released mainframe model 4341. The Japan branch of the Society was second in line, by lot, to receive one of these latest mainframe computers. However, the agent for the company in Japan felt that it would be better to give it to one of their regular customers who had the resources to do the programming. The five brothers and one sister working on our project quickly drew up the specifications for the Society's unique needs. After seeing these detailed specifications, the company readily included our order in its first shipment of this new model.

Under the skillful direction of these specialists, more than 40 willing young brothers and sisters received training to be programmers. The goal was to build a fully automated system for typesetting and composition for the Society's Japanese publications. The system came to be called SCRIPT (System of Character Reproduction Incorporating Photo-Typesetting). In less than two years, it was ready for a test. The first publication produced by the system was the 192-page book *"Let Your Kingdom Come."*

By 1987 the capacity of secular personal computers had advanced to the point where they could accommodate the needs peculiar to the Japanese script. So when the phototypesetter linked with the SCRIPT system broke down, a switch to the Society's less expensive typesetting system was made. The

specialized features that our brothers had developed for the SCRIPT system, incorporating a Japanese "alphabet" of some 8,000 complicated Japanese characters, were then integrated into the MEPS system. A number of programmers who worked on the local Japanese system now work in other countries to support the Society's worldwide publishing system.

A New Department Begins

For close to 30 years, the Society's printery in Brooklyn had been supplying Japan with the books it needed for distribution in the field. But as work got under way on construction of the new factory at Ebina in 1978, the decision was made to have the Japan branch begin producing its own books.

Learning what we were planning to do, the president of a large adhesives company visited us. When he found out that we intended to make our own adhesives, he offered to get the raw materials and the equipment we would need. Or if we chose, he would be glad to prepare the glue for us at his cost. Why? A few years earlier, he had attended a bindery- and printing-machine exhibition in Chicago, U.S.A. There he and his group met brothers from Brooklyn Bethel, who invited them to tour the Watchtower Society's printery in New York. The entire operation, especially the kindness and hard work of the brothers, impressed the group very much. Now he wanted to help us in any way he could. It turned out to be cheaper to get our adhesives from him than to make our own. Through his introduction, we were also able to contact other materials suppliers, and this has resulted in substantial savings.

Many machine manufacturers cooperated in a similar way. When representatives of a manufacturer of trimmers and gatherers came to Ebina to draw up a contract, they were deeply impressed by all they saw at the construction site,



James Mantz shared in factory oversight (shown with wife, Sarah)

especially by the hard-working volunteers. As a result, they offered to reduce the price of their machines by 1,000,000 yen (\$10,000 U.S.).

Who Could Train the Brothers?

There was no one in the factory with any practical experience in bookbinding. Robert Pobuda had been invited to Brooklyn to receive some six weeks of training and to get information for training the brothers in Japan. The material was translated, and a bindery school was held. This was supplemented with the help of professionals from commercial companies who came and instructed the brothers in the use of bookbinding materials. We also arranged to tour some commercial binderies to observe their operations.

Once, after having toured such a bindery, the brothers were invited into the president's office. "Do you know why I let you people come?" he asked. "Normally we never allow outside bindery people to see our factory, but a week before you requested permission for a tour, a Witness called at my door and offered the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. I was impressed with her manners and by what I read in the magazines." He accepted more literature, including subscrip-

tions for *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, and offered to help train a number of the brothers for a month in his factory.

Over the years since then, those in the bindery have continued to improve their skills and deepen their knowledge. Commercial bookbinding companies have even sent their workers to tour our factory. They never fail to be impressed by the cleanliness and attention to detail that they observe. James Mantz, a former overseer of the factory, recalls: "We had one bindery company that was given permission to make a video as its representatives went around the regular tour route. They planned to use the video to train their own factory personnel. They had the same equipment and were doing similar work, but they wanted to use Bethelites as the models because of their attitude, evident in their happy faces while they were working, and because they were doing the work very efficiently." Brother Mantz also remembers the amazement of a business executive who toured the Society's bindery. The executive said: "Japanese young people suffer from what they call the three 'K' syndrome—*kiken*, *kitanai*, and *kitsui*." That means dangerous, dirty, and demanding. If work involves any of these, most young people are not interested. But that is not so in the Ebina factory.

Particular interest has been shown in our deluxe bindery. The bindery at our Ebina facilities has become one of the prime sources of information regarding deluxe binding in Japan. In this bindery, leather-covered Bibles are mass-produced.

Producing the Complete *New World Translation*

The change to offset printing, the establishment of the bindery, and the development of the SCRIPT system all laid a foundation for producing the complete *New World Translation*.

Permission to proceed with translating the Hebrew Scripture portion of the *New World Translation* had come in 1975. This was to be a team effort. Three translators were designated to share in the project. What could be done to maintain a high level of uniformity among the various workers? Extensive and detailed lists of renderings, together with information on proper names, animals, plants, minerals, colors, diseases, and items such as tools, clothing, foods, and sacrificial offerings were made and shared among the translators. Hundreds of synonymous word groups and important phrases also had to be carefully studied and added to the lists. Later, the Japanese Bible translators were among those invited to share their experience with those who were designing a Bible translation support system at headquarters. Their suggestions were among those that are now being employed by Bible translators around the world.

The complete *New World Translation* in Japanese was both printed and bound in our facilities at Ebina. In order to produce the 136,000 Bibles needed for release at the 17 "Kingdom Truth" District Conventions in 1982, the Graphics Department, the pressroom, and the bindery operated 24 hours a day. Some of the brothers worked 12- to 16-hour shifts. They were spurred on by keeping in mind that they were carrying forward the sort of work that Ezra, 'a skilled copyist of the law of God,' had done in ancient times. But while Ezra had done his work by hand, they were using a high-speed web offset press to accomplish it in Japanese. As a reminder to imitate that skilled copyist, they posted the words of Ezra 7:6 on the side of the press.

That year all the bindery brothers attended the final convention in Fukushima. They completed the last Bible needed for the release just eight minutes before the end of the last workday before the convention. Shigeru Yoshioka, who was in the bindery then, recalls: "We were exhausted, but when we

saw the tears of joy on the faces of the brothers receiving the long-awaited complete *New World Translation*, we all felt that it was well worth the effort."

With the Japanese translation of the Bible in computerized form, it was not difficult to produce a variety of different-sized editions. Over the years since its completion in 1982, close to 3,000,000 copies of the Japanese *New World Translation* in various editions have been produced.

Further Additions to Accommodate Growth

Just like a fast-growing adolescent, the theocratic organization in Japan quickly outgrew its branch facilities. In February 1984 further expansion was announced, this time including a six-story factory extension and an eight-story residence building, both with basements. The new factory was to have floor space of almost 243,000 square feet, twice that of the original Ebina factory. The new residence building would have 128 rooms to accommodate Bethel volunteers.

The construction work on the addition began in September 1984 and was completed in February 1988. During this period the number of publishers in Japan passed the 100,000 mark, and it has continued to grow. This project would equip the branch not only to serve the growing needs of the Japanese field but also to assist with printing needs for other countries. On May 13, 1989, the new buildings were dedicated to Jehovah, the One who had brought in the increase that made the facilities necessary.

Placing Care of One's Family Ahead of Other Interests

The nation's media have at times turned the spotlight on Jehovah's Witnesses. A media campaign in 1986 awakened an awareness of how much Jehovah's Witnesses care for their children. A headline in the *Mainichi Daily News* read: "Top

JNR Exec Quits to Be With Family." In Japan, a father with teenage children faces a dilemma when he gets a job transfer, even if it means a promotion. Transfers are made regardless of the family situation. When their children are in high school, parents often shy away from the thought of leaving their hometown as a family. A father will usually accept the transfer and leave his family behind. In Japanese, this is called *tanshinfunin*. The newspaper article reported that Takeshi Tamura, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, had been appointed director general of the Kyushu Bureau of the Japanese National Railways (JNR). However, he chose to resign rather than take this prestigious position and leave his family behind. "The job of the director general can be taken by anybody. But I am the only father of my children," said Brother Tamura, as quoted in one of the newspapers.

People were puzzled. Earlier the media had painted a cruel picture of Jehovah's Witnesses, depicting them as people who are willing to let their children die. And yet, here was a man who because of wanting to be with his family was courageous enough to resign from a position that most JNR men would give their eyeteeth to have. Television reporters went from house to house. They interviewed *tanshinfunin* businessmen as they got off the train to spend the weekend with their families. The reporters asked people how they felt about Brother Tamura's decision. A common reaction was: 'I admire his decision. I wish I had the nerve to do the same.'

Recalling what happened, Brother Tamura says: "I don't know how the *Mainichi* newspaper got the information. Usually, when such information is leaked, JNR will intentionally change the whole personnel scheme just to prove that what was reported was not true. However, this time it went through just as it was announced by the media. Jehovah must have been behind it all. Through the media, the Japa-

nese got the message that Jehovah's Witnesses are people who care about their family." Today, Brother Tamura and his family all serve as full-time evangelizers. He is the presiding overseer in his congregation, and his son is a temporary Bethel volunteer.

Progress in Okinawa

After Okinawa was integrated under the Japan branch, further good progress was made in that territory, where old traditions still have a strong influence on the lives of the people. Age did not hold back 70-year-old Kiku Sunagawa from taking up the pioneer work. For many years she had been in bondage to the local *yuta*, or spirit medium. But she was deeply moved when she learned from the Scriptures that the true God has a name and that he can read the heart. She immediately destroyed everything she had that was connected with the *yuta*. Then she determined to learn how to read so that she could gain a fuller knowledge of God's will. Her study conductor patiently gave her the help needed. She got baptized in 1981, and the following year she enrolled as a pioneer.

Although she was formerly illiterate, she was now able to teach an elderly Bible student's husband to read and write so that he and his wife could progress together toward baptism. The appreciative couple gave the Akamichi Congregation a suitable piece of land on which to build a fine new Kingdom Hall. Kiku's efforts were further blessed when her two younger sisters also broke free from the influence of the *yuta* in order to serve the true God, Jehovah.

In 1989 an elderly couple in Hamamatsu accepted an assignment to witness on the small island of Aguni Jima, some 40 miles off the coast of Okinawa. They sold their wedding rings to scrape up the funds needed for traveling to this

remote island. Twenty days were devoted to visiting the 600 houses on the island. One day when they were walking along a stone hedge under the scorching summer sun, two little girls offered them a drink of water from their canteen. Moved by the kindness of the girls, the couple decided to visit the parents of the children. When they introduced themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses, the parents warmly embraced them. These people had not seen any of Jehovah's Witnesses since they moved from Okinawa eight months earlier. A Bible study by mail was arranged, and later the study was turned over to a congregation in Naha, Okinawa. The parents together with their eldest daughter were baptized in 1993. They are helping many people on that isolated island to learn the truth.

In 1980, when Okinawa came back under the Japan branch, the number of publishers on Okinawa and neighboring islands was 958 in 22 congregations. Now there are upwards of 2,600 Kingdom proclaimers actively serving in the Okinawa Prefecture.

Regional Building Committees Help

For several decades congregations had built their Kingdom Halls with what experience and resources were available locally, but there were structural, legal, and other problems. Most congregations did not pay much attention to color coordination. Unskilled volunteers made up the major part of the work force, and it took a long time to complete projects. The months, even years, required by some building projects endangered the spirituality of the congregation and especially of the ones who were involved in the construction. The time was ripe to consider the possibility of applying the principles of quick construction that were being employed in the United States.

The first Regional Building Committee was formed in the Tokyo area in September 1990. Seven others were subsequently established to cover other parts of the country. In March 1991 the first Kingdom Hall in Japan on which quick-construction methods were used went up in Nakaminato, Ibaraki Prefecture. Although a violent windstorm on the second day caused a temporary delay, the 120-seat hall was completed in just four days.

Since then, the original 8 Regional Building Committees throughout Japan have been increased to 11, assisting in the construction of from 80 to 100 Kingdom Halls each year. This includes double Kingdom Hall structures and halls having the ground level as a car-parking area because of the high price of land. In Okinawa the Regional Building Committee had to modify the plans in order to deal with typhoons that frequently hit the islands.

The day before the quick-construction project for the Ko-chinda Congregation in Okinawa was due to begin, the brother who had donated the land passed away. His funeral was planned for 4:00 p.m. on the following Sunday—in the not-as-yet-built Kingdom Hall. The brother was well-known locally, so his funeral was announced through the media. Seeing only the concrete foundation on the construction site, people asked: "Are you really going to put up a building in time for the funeral?" Yes, the hall was completed in time, and many people, including some from legal and political circles, assembled there to listen to the memorial talk.

At the present time, there are 1,796 Kingdom Halls throughout Japan and Okinawa, and 511 of these have been built or refurbished by the quick-construction method. These halls are eloquent testimony to the presence of Jehovah's Witnesses and bring appropriate praise to the God they worship.



*Assembly Halls:
Hyogo, Ebina,
Kansai*



Assembly Halls Throughout the Country

The same can be said about the Assembly Halls, where circuit assemblies and special assembly day programs are held. Starting in the 1980's, Assembly Halls were built one after another—in Kansai, Ebina, Chiba, Tokai, Hyogo, Gumma, Hokkaido, and Tochigi. A ninth Assembly Hall, built in Kyushu, was completed in 1997.

The exemplary conduct of hardworking brothers often served to change the hearts of neighbors who were at first not favorably disposed. When the Tokai Assembly Hall was being

built near Nagoya, a neighbor strongly opposed the project and tried to organize a campaign to stop it. He came to the site every day to check what was going on. One day, he came with a saw in his hand. When the brother in charge of the project asked him what he intended to do, he said: "I've been watching what you've been doing until now. And it looks like the bamboo grove is blocking your way. Let me share in volunteer service today." He pitched in to help.

In 1995, when the brothers were building the Hokkaido Assembly Hall on the northernmost island, funds were quite limited. So they were delighted to obtain 2,000 seats free of charge. How did that come about? During the construction, a massive earthquake hit Kobe and its neighboring cities, rendering many buildings useless. The Kobe Kokusai Kaikan, which included a beautiful concert hall, was one of these. After the decision to demolish the building was made, a television news report showed musicians bidding farewell to the hall. Seeing the newscast, Witnesses doing relief work in Kobe contacted the ones in charge of the building and obtained permission to remove the seats and ship them to the Hokkaido Assembly Hall. A third of the 2,000 seats were brand new, and the rest would be usable after being reupholstered. The company that demolished the concert hall was happy that the seats were out of the way.

Beginning with the Tochigi and Hokkaido Assembly Halls in 1995, brothers and sisters who qualified to serve under the Regional Building Committees for Kingdom Hall construction became involved in the building of Assembly Halls too. The brothers highly prize their Assembly Halls and the opportunity to associate together during their assemblies. They discern in these fine buildings yet another evidence of Jehovah's rich blessing on their efforts to render a worthy sacrifice of praise.

Suitable Convention Sites

During the 1980's most of the large district conventions were held in open-air stadiums. This involved coping with extreme summer heat and humidity as well as typhoons, which begin to pummel Japan about the time of the summer conventions.

In 1983 a district convention for over 20,000 was scheduled for August 18 to 21 at the Greenery Squares in the Expo Memorial Park in Osaka. In preparation, volunteers erected two huge tents on Sunday, August 14. However, a typhoon with a wind speed of 100 miles per hour was heading directly toward Osaka. The brothers decided to dismantle the tents in order to avoid danger. "The convention headquarters looked like a weather station as the brothers carefully watched the typhoon's progress," says Shogo Nakagawa, the convention overseer.

"The 16th became a day for prayer. If the convention was to open on time, the brothers must start erecting the tents by 5:00 a.m., August 17. The newspaper for the evening of August 16 read: 'Rainstorm Expected in the Osaka Area.' If we were to erect tents on schedule, the typhoon had to move faster and take a right turn, and the western clouds must clear away. That was exactly what happened. At 4:00 a.m. on the 17th, it was raining heavily in the southern part of Osaka but not around the convention site. The tents were reerected in time for the convention, which started at 1:20 p.m. on Thursday the 18th, just as scheduled."

Gradually, however, indoor arenas and halls with capacities of over 10,000 became available. In the 1990's, Jehovah's Witnesses began to rent these air-conditioned halls. One of the largest of these indoor gatherings was held in the Tokyo Dome Stadium in 1992. Altogether, 39,905 people attended this "Light Bearers" District Convention. As the stadium was

in the center of Tokyo, the convention was a good witness to onlookers. A man working near the stadium admitted to a pioneer who visited his home that he and his workmates had been critical of the Witnesses. But after watching the convention delegates, he apologized and said: "Now that my views have changed, I'll read those magazines with my wife."

Evacuees Welcomed

In the 1980's the brothers' ability to fill another need was put to the test. Just as Christians in the first century had opportunities to show the depth of their love by providing assistance to needy fellow believers in Judea, so too Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan in recent years have had opportunities to display these Christian qualities in times of disaster. (Acts 11: 28, 29; Rom. 15:26) The way they have done it has given further evidence of the fulfillment of Jesus' words: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35.

The first example of extensive relief activities occurred after Mount Mihara, on the island of Izu Oshima, erupted on November 21, 1986. At 4:17 p.m., Jiro Nishimura, an elder in the only congregation on the island, felt a great explosion. "When I went outside," said Brother Nishimura, "there was a mushroom cloud above Mount Mihara just like that of an atom-bomb explosion." Within an hour, 80 earthquakes rocked the island. Overnight more than 10,000 people were evacuated from the island.

Within a few hours after the eruption, relief committees were designated on the Izu Peninsula and in Tokyo to look after the evacuated Witnesses. Following the evacuation order, Yoshio Nakamura joined with others from congregations in Tokyo to rush to the piers at two o'clock in the morning to assist members of the Izu Oshima Congregation. One of the

evacuees later said: "As we got off the ship, we spotted a sign saying, 'Jehovah's Witnesses.' . . . Tears welled up in my wife's eyes, as she was overcome by relief at finding our brothers there to meet us at the pier."

Shimabara Eruption

Less than five years later, in June 1991, Mount Fugen, on Shimabara Peninsula near Nagasaki, erupted. More than 40 people were killed. One Witness and her children whose house was in the path of a stream of superheated gas and ash escaped by the skin of their teeth. Of the 42 publishers associated with the Shimabara Congregation, 30 had to evacuate. The congregation could no longer use their Kingdom Hall, since it stood within the danger zone. Congregations throughout the country were informed of the needs of their brothers in the stricken area, and a bank account for relief funds was opened. The response was immediate; it was so great that the local bank was overwhelmed. They asked that the remittances be temporarily suspended while they tried to get caught up with processing them. In less than a month, the local Relief Committee asked that the congregations stop sending money, as they had already received more than they needed. In addition to caring for those who lost their jobs and their living quarters, the donations that were sent made it possible to provide a fine new Kingdom Hall for the Shimabara Congregation and one for the newly formed Arie Congregation, with which half of the refugees now associated.

The relief activities, along with the loving concern expressed in the more than 3,000 letters received, deeply moved the hearts of Witnesses in the disaster area. As a result, in April of the year following the disaster, the 28 publishers of the Shimabara Congregation as well as the 20 baptized members of the Arie Congregation all enrolled in the auxiliary

pioneer service for the month. It was a token of their gratitude to Jehovah.

Legal Assistance Needed

Satan, of course, has not been pleased with the united activity of Jehovah's servants. As in other countries, he has tried to throw up barriers to impede the forward movement of Jehovah's people. This has made it necessary at times to take matters to the courts.—Compare Acts 25:11.

In order to handle the situations requiring legal counsel, a legal desk was established at the branch office in the early part of the 1980's. In 1991 a young attorney, along with his wife, volunteered to serve full-time at the branch. After consulting with other brothers in the legal profession, he prepared much helpful information for the bodies of elders on such matters as the renting and owning of Kingdom Halls, the proper handling of violence against Jehovah's people, and wise steps to take in divorce and child-custody conflicts. In addition, the branch was provided with counsel needed to deal with changes in laws involving publishing, exporting of Bible literature, and similar matters.

Religious Conscience Brought to Court

A noteworthy case brought before the courts involved 16-year-old Kunihiro Kobayashi, enrolled in the Kobe Municipal Industrial Technical College. (In Japan, technical colleges offer a five-year noncompulsory course that includes the three years of high school.) Certain schools had made it a practice to fail or expel students who did not take part in martial-arts drills. They were thus denied the right to an education. At the time of Lloyd Barry's zone visit to the branch in December 1986, it was recommended that an exemplary brother who was facing this problem, preferably the son of an

elder, be selected and that a petition against his expulsion be filed in the courts.

In 1990, Kunihiro Kobayashi together with four other students had refused kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) drills in keeping with the injunction of Isaiah 2:4 to 'beat swords into plowshares and not learn war anymore.' As a result, they were denied promotion to the next grade. Kunihiro, although being at the very top of his class scholastically, was subsequently expelled from the school for failing the physical education class two years in a row. Kunihiro and four others filed a petition against the school's actions, claiming that their constitutional rights to freedom of worship and to an education had been infringed upon. After various appeals, it was the case of Kunihiro that finally reached the Supreme Court. On March 8, 1996, the judges of the Second Petit Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in his favor, declaring that the college had erred by forcing him to choose between his religion and an education. This was the first time that the court had ruled on a case in which freedom of religion was weighed against the authority of a school over its curriculum. The new principal called together the entire student body, admitted the school's lack of good judgment in the case, and asked them to "warmly welcome Mr. Kobayashi back as a fellow student." In April 1996, four years after being expelled, Brother Kobayashi, now 21 years old, started back to school.

The decision was extensively reported on throughout the country, and Jehovah's Witnesses rejoiced that Jehovah's name and righteous ways were again brought to the public's attention and that a favorable witness was given.—Matt. 10:18.

Showing Respect for God's Law on Blood

Although the concern shown by Jehovah's Witnesses for the lives of their fellowmen is well-known, it has been nec-

Japan

Kunihiro Kobayashi |



essary to put forth strenuous effort to overcome deep-seated prejudices against the Witnesses' respect for the sanctity of blood. (Gen. 9:4; Acts 15:28, 29) Prior to the 1980's, the branch office kept a list of hospitals and doctors that had performed bloodless surgery. But this was not a list of cooperative doctors; some had only reluctantly performed nonblood operations.

Could more be done to help Witnesses who needed the names of doctors who were willing to perform bloodless surgery? Akihiro Uotani, who became directly involved in filling this need, recalls: "We were frustrated, as we often did not know what to do with the desperate calls to the Society seeking the names of doctors who were willing to operate without blood." Then, in the early part of 1989, rumors reached Japan to the effect that Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) seminars were being held in the United States. Interested, the branch wrote a letter of inquiry to Brooklyn headquarters. Later, in November that year, a letter was received from Hospital Information Services in Brooklyn informing the branch that the Publishing Committee had given approval to hold an HLC seminar in Japan in March 1990. It would be one of the first to be held outside the United States.

In addition to the 91 newly appointed HLC members, 111 traveling overseers, 25 Witness doctors from Japan, 44 brothers from the Republic of Korea, and 3 instructors from Brooklyn would be present. The seminar was to be conducted in English and translated into Korean and Japanese.

"During the seminar, the instructors repeatedly emphasized the need to 'educate the doctors,'" recalls Brother Uotani. "Some expressed serious doubts about whether interviewing the doctors and visiting the hospitals with a view to educating the doctors would be accepted in Japan. This was especially so since the Japanese traditionally accepted without question whatever treatment the doctors administered, and the doctors were not inclined to discuss with laypersons what they were doing. However, after the seminar the three instructors formed teams with Liaison Committee members and visited hospitals in the Tokyo area, with very fine results."

Educating the Media and the Doctors

Because of prejudiced reports and inaccurate information appearing in the press, it was felt that efforts should be made to educate the media as well as the doctors concerning our stand on blood. So, beginning in September 1990, after the release of the brochure *How Can Blood Save Your Life?*, the branch launched a campaign to meet reporters who were writing articles on medicine for national and local newspapers. It proved to be very successful. Some of the reporters, impressed by what they were shown, even offered to write an article about doctors who perform bloodless surgery.

Another fine result of this campaign was that science reporters for the leading national newspapers informed the Osaka HLC that the Ethics Committee of the National Center for Circulatory Disease was discussing how to deal with the Witnesses. Immediately, a letter was written in which re-

quest was made for an interview with the director of the center. Both the director and the vice-chairman of the Ethics Committee attended this meeting. As a result, on April 22, 1991, the decision was made to respect the rights of the Witnesses to refuse blood transfusions.

Following this fine start, ethics committees at other hospitals were contacted with similar results. When the Ethics Committee for the Tokyo Metropolitan Hospitals and Maternities was preparing guidelines on how to deal with the refusal of blood transfusions on religious grounds, a representative of the Hospital Information Services from the branch and members of HLCs in Tokyo were invited to take part. The 13-member committee recommended that all the 16 hospitals run by the Tokyo metropolitan government respect the wishes of adult patients who desire bloodless management even if the doctors felt that blood was necessary. "In the case of a patient brought to the hospital unconscious but in possession of a document certifying that he or she does not wish to have a transfusion, the doctor must place priority on that wish," reported *Mainichi Shimbun*. Further, it stated that "high-school children will have their wishes regarding transfusion respected as if they were adults."

Even hospitals that had formally posted signs reading "No Jehovah's Witnesses Accepted" have changed their attitude and are willing to treat Witnesses and to use bloodless methods in doing so. There are now more than 15,000 names on the list of cooperative doctors. Some doctors felt slighted if the local HLC overlooked them. In October 1995 the Shin-Tokyo Hospital in Matsudo started a bloodless management program, which totally respects the Witnesses' stand on blood. So, fine forward steps have been taken on this vital matter.



Kobe after the earthquake in 1995

Love Coupled With Organization

As foretold by Jesus Christ, in these last days great earthquakes continue to strike in one place after another. (Matt. 24:3, 7) One of these struck the Kobe area on Tuesday, January 17, 1995. This earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale, took over 5,000 lives and left thousands more homeless. Among the 9,000 Witnesses living in the affected area, 13 baptized Witnesses and 2 unbaptized publishers lost their lives. Hiroshi and Kazu Kaneko, a special pioneer couple serving in the Nishinomiya Central Congregation, were found under the rubble of an old apartment that morning. It took more than four hours to dig Brother Kaneko out, but his wife, Kazu, had been crushed to death. Because Hiroshi had been under the weight of the rubble for a long time, his kidneys stopped functioning, leaving him in critical condition for many days. “It hit me hard how useless material be-

longings are,” Hiroshi said. “In contrast, I realized the importance of inner qualities such as faith and hope. Those qualities help us overcome the worst of conditions that we may face.”

Moved by intense love for their brothers, Witnesses quickly acted to provide help. Providentially, the circuits around Kobe had been organized to cut across the city from north to south. Since the quake hit the area along the coastline from east to west, each circuit had unaffected congregations that could assist those in need. Elders in the unaffected congregations nearby took the initiative in organizing the relief work. On the day after the first jolt, a convoy of 16 motorcycles delivered food and water to the congregations in downtown Kobe.

Circuit overseers at once set up temporary relief centers to care for Witnesses in the affected area. The branch designated six Kingdom Halls that were not destroyed as depots for relief supplies. “Within five hours, those halls were filled to capacity,” recalls Yoshihiro Nagasaki, a member of the Branch Committee who got into the affected area by riding on the back of a motorcycle belonging to a fellow Witness. “We had to ask the brothers to reroute the relief supplies to nearby Assembly Halls.” Supply centers were set up where representatives from the local congregations could pick up the needed items, and the elders in each congregation would then distribute the supplies to its members.

The Bible encourages Christians to “work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.” (Gal. 6:10) The Witnesses gladly shared with their neighbors what they received. Two days after the Kobe earthquake, when a Witness elder realized that the relief supplies for the Witnesses were sufficient but that other people were

in desperate need, he quickly dispatched two vans full of food supplies to a local refugee center.

Further Assistance Extended

Attention was given also to emotional and spiritual needs. Arrangements were promptly made to continue the congregation meetings. One congregation met in a park on the very day of the earthquake. By the Sunday following the quake, most congregations in the area held their regular *Watchtower* Study. To care for the emotional and spiritual needs of those affected, seven circuit overseers were sent to the five affected circuits in addition to their regular circuit overseers. They made special visits to strengthen the brothers and to help them keep the Kingdom interests first in their lives in spite of the disaster.

Ten Kingdom Halls had been rendered unfit for use. The homes of many of the brothers had been totally or partially destroyed. The 11 Regional Building Committees in Japan each organized teams of about 21 workers to repair the damaged houses. A relief team of Witnesses from the United States came at their own expense to share in the work. Before these teams had finished their work, they had repaired 1,023 houses and cleared away 4 houses that had been destroyed. Five Kingdom Halls were rebuilt, and four were repaired by self-sacrificing brothers who came from all over the country.

Unbelieving family members were treated with the same kindness as was shown to the believing members of such households. A sister with an unbelieving husband and four children lost her second son in the earthquake. The family stayed in the Kingdom Hall with 70 other Witnesses for one week. Observing how the brothers showed concern and gave practical help, the husband began to appreciate Jehovah's organization. One day he visited the relief headquarters in Sui-

ta. There he saw many brothers working hard for the benefit of people they did not know. Emotion welled up inside him, and he could not hold back his tears. That very day, he agreed to a Bible study.

Coping Constructively With Changes

As the years have passed, the situation in Japan has changed. By the end of March 1992, forty-three years after the first missionary group arrived in 1949, the entire territory assigned to the Japan branch was receiving regular coverage with the good news of the Kingdom. However, the attitude and circumstances of the people have also changed, and this has required flexibility on the part of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Rodney Kealoha, a missionary who had been in the traveling work for many years, observed: "Twenty-five years ago [in the 1970's], the Japanese people were very courteous and friendly. When the Witnesses called on them, even though they were not interested, they listened." People took time to read and in general had a high respect for good morals and social order. However, they gradually became more distracted by growing material prosperity. Housewives began to join the work force. Fewer people could be found at home during the day. Those who were at home were often too busy for extended conversations about religion and were not willing to accept literature that they felt they had no time to read.

High-security apartment buildings and homes with intercoms were being built. Publishers in these areas had to adjust to giving their presentations over intercoms. They learned to call back on those who simply displayed kind and pleasant manners. Hiroko, a pioneer serving in Sapporo, was turned down over the intercom by a woman who said that she was Shinto. Convinced that the woman must have a good heart because of her cheerful voice and polite manner, Hiroko

called back. Gradually she developed a friendship over the intercom. After ten months of such calls, she was finally greeted with, "Wait a minute please," and the woman appeared at the door and invited her into the house. A discussion on a family matter quickly led to a Bible study, and then to baptism. The new sister, now a pioneer, did have a good heart.

Since many people are seldom at home during the day, *Our Kingdom Ministry* recommended increased evening and street witnessing. The publishers immediately responded with enthusiasm. Soon, throughout Japan, they could be seen displaying *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* on the streets, especially around the busy train stations.

Typical was a sister near Yokohama. Even though she had a full-time job, she wanted to be an auxiliary pioneer. An elder suggested that each day before going to her secular job, she might do street witnessing near a train station from 6:00 to 8:00 a.m. After overcoming her own timidity and the initial ridicule by some commuters, she developed a route of some 40 persons who were glad to receive the magazines. These included commuters, station workers, and nearby shop owners. Her average magazine placements were 235 a month in a territory where pioneers usually placed around 30. By sharing Scriptural points with people for just a few moments each day, she was able to start six different Bible studies—one with a policeman.

Other publishers applied the suggestions on telephone witnessing so as to reach people in high-security buildings. Persistence and featuring an appealing subject have opened the way for many Bible studies. When a sister who was using the telephone asked one woman whether she gave much thought to what the future held for her and her family, the woman said that she had. Disappointment in the ability of others to help had affected her health. As a result she had

isolated herself at home. Moved by the genuine concern expressed by the Witness, she agreed to meet her at a nearby supermarket. On being shown the contents of the *Family Life* book, she readily agreed to a Bible study.

Energetic field activity along with the maturing of the congregations has resulted in steady and sustained growth. The current string of successive peaks in publishers began in January 1979 and has continued unbroken for over 18 years. Through the latter half of the 1980's and the early 1990's, the publisher increase in Japan averaged more than 10,000 each year. By March 1995, there were 200,000 Kingdom proclaimers in the country. By August 1997, 220,663 publishers were associating with 3,785 congregations, compared with 14,199 publishers in 320 congregations in August 1972. An increasing number of these, however, are not publishers whose native language is Japanese.

Help for Foreign-Language Groups

As a result of a strong Japanese economy, many workers speaking languages other than Japanese have moved into the country. These include Jehovah's Witnesses. Japan is no longer a land where the native tongue of nearly everyone is Japanese. How could the foreign-language populations be helped spiritually?

Prior to the 1980's, there was a relatively small foreign-language population. Small isolated groups or congregations had been formed in Misawa, Tachikawa, and Okinawa for the benefit of the dependent wives and children of U.S. military personnel as well as other interested people.

The largest of these was for the American military bases in Okinawa. In 1968, Karl and Evalyn Emerson, formerly missionaries in Korea, moved with their young son to assist the English-speaking population on Okinawa. They were

later joined in this fruitful field by Bill and Mary Ives and Wayne and Penny Frazee from the 40th and 52nd classes of Gilead. Wayne, driving a tiny, dilapidated 360cc car around the sprawling Kadena Air Base, was particularly effective in working among the draftees because of his own military background. Together, Wayne and Penny were able to help about 100 persons to baptism during the 15 years they served in Okinawa. So effective was their ministry that the commanding officer of one base requested that they preach elsewhere. Why? "You are getting my best men," he complained.

Though there was a constant shuffling of people in and out of the congregation, as assignments to other military bases were made, literally thousands of people have attended the meetings and hundreds have been helped to take their stand for Jehovah. The majority of these have continued to serve Jehovah upon returning to the United States. Some have become elders and ministerial servants. One of these, Nick Simonelli, later attended the 93rd class of Gilead, following in the footsteps of the one who studied with him. He is now serving in Ecuador with his wife.

English-Language Territory in Japan

Toward the close of the 1970's, with the end of the Vietnam War, the English-language groups in Japan gradually flickered out. But early in the 1980's, noting the number of English-speaking people around the U.S. Atsugi Naval Air Base, just a 15-minute drive from Bethel, James Mantz, Jr., invited his parents, who were then living in California, U.S.A., to step over into the Orient and help. (Compare Acts 16:9.) So in March 1981, at the ages of 62 and 59, James Mantz, Sr., and his wife, Ruth, moved to Sagami-hara near the Atsugi base. "Our territory was anywhere we could find English-speaking people," recalls Ruth. "While doing street

work, Ruth would often stop young American soldiers on bicycles with her hands spread out in order to show them the magazines," recalls a member of the Ebina Bethel family. Sadly, James Mantz, Sr., passed away shortly after arriving in Japan, but Ruth stayed in the area and helped a number of people to come into the truth. The small Sagami-hara English group became a congregation in October 1985.

As the Japanese economy grew stronger during the 1980's, the number of aliens increased dramatically. Many thousands of Filipinos, South Americans, Africans, Chinese, and Koreans streamed into the country as guest workers. The Society took steps to extend spiritual help to these foreign workers. English-speaking Japanese pioneers, including many serving at Bethel, were assigned to give assistance. "When the Society started to take the lead in this," said one brother who had been with the English congregation for many years, "the increase immediately came in." By September 1, 1997, there were 18 English congregations, constituting a separate circuit.

Help for the Brazilians

Large numbers of Japanese whose parents or grandparents had emigrated to Brazil came back to Japan to work, but they understood neither Japanese nor English. In 1986, an ex-missionary couple, Kazuyuki and Nanako Kiritani, who had served in Brazil, moved to Yokohama, where a few Portuguese-speaking sisters and Bible students were located. This small group started to have a *Watchtower* Study along with an abbreviated Theocratic Ministry School once a month in Portuguese.

In the spring of 1991, the Society invited three Brazilian elders, who were living in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Toyohashi, as well as Brother Kiritani, to discuss the development of the



Masayuki and
Masako
Yamamoto

Portuguese field. In August 1991 four Portuguese groups began to operate. The branch had recruited willing Bethelites and started a Portuguese language class at Bethel. They eagerly learned the language and became a part of the foundation of the Portuguese groups. The newly formed groups soon became congregations, and within six years, there were 21 Portuguese-speaking congregations, these also forming their own circuit.

Spanish Field Opens

In September 1987, the first meeting was held in Spanish to help eight sisters who had been associating with the Portuguese group until that time. Louis Delgado, a single brother from Peru, took the lead. In those days some of the sisters traveled six hours to attend the Spanish meetings, but the spiritual help they received made it worthwhile. Because of the language barrier, some who had married Japanese citizens for financial security were experiencing marital difficulties and also had a hard time expressing their feelings to the elders in the Japanese congregations.

The field ministry for the Spanish group was also a challenge. In order to organize territories, they went to all the 29 stations of the Yamanote Line, the train line that loops central Tokyo, searching for Spanish names on the doors. Al-

though tiring and time-consuming, this activity provided well-defined territory for them to work.

During the day, groups of sisters would visit areas where many Colombian women lived. The women worked in bars that were usually operated by the *yakuza*, the Japanese Mafia. When a woman seemed to be making spiritual progress, the *yakuza* would intervene and transfer her to another location. One such Bible student, however, progressed to the point of realizing that she should change her job in order to be pleasing to Jehovah. This meant fleeing and hiding from the *yakuza*. With the help of her study conductor, she was eventually able to return to her own country.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1990's, when a large number of workers flowed into Japan from Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, and other countries, Jehovah had a small Spanish group prepared to look after their spiritual needs. In 1991 a Spanish class was started for Bethelites who were willing to help. Within one year some were delivering public talks. In 1993 the first Spanish congregation was formed in the Tokyo area. By 1997, there were 13 flourishing Spanish congregations. These make up a separate foreign-language circuit.

Helping Those From Asia

A significant number of Chinese were also streaming into Japan. Among them were thousands of students as well as descendants of Japanese children who had been left in China at the end of World War II. It was estimated that more than 300,000 Chinese were living in Japan, 200,000 of whom were in the greater Tokyo area. Lifting up their eyes and viewing the Chinese field, the brothers could see that it was white for harvesting, 'but the workers were few.'—Matt. 9:37; John 4:35.

Masayuki Yamamoto and his wife, Masako, had spent eight years in missionary service in Taiwan. In 1992, Chinese

was taught to a number of Bethelites who were willing to help the Chinese-speaking population. Immediately, Masayuki contacted those who spoke some Chinese, and a Chinese group was started with 28 publishers. They were mostly Japanese pioneers who, though still struggling with their Chinese, were eager to help interested ones who spoke that language. Such zeal on the part of the Japanese Witnesses moved the hearts of the Chinese. One young woman received the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* from a brother who was studying at the same school she attended. She read the book in one week. This moved her to start attending all the meetings. She was amazed to see so many Japanese studying Chinese just so that they could share the good news with Chinese-speaking people. She and her younger brother progressed quickly, and within a year they were baptized. She was conducting her own Bible studies even before she was baptized.

In May 1993 the first Chinese circuit assembly was held. There were 399 in attendance and 8 were baptized. Soon there were five Mandarin Chinese congregations functioning, as well as a Chinese book study group in a Japanese congregation.

Other Language Groups

In the late 1980's, Penn Pitorest and his wife, Phiksang, started to study the Bible. Both of them were refugees from Cambodia and had lost their parents in the massacre in their homeland. Progress was slow because there were practically no publications for study in Cambodian. But eventually they were baptized. Being concerned about the spiritual needs of fellow refugees from Cambodia, they endeavored to conduct Bible studies with them. Soon a small Cambodian group was formed. They received more help in 1994 when *The Watchtower* began to appear in Cambodian. Following

that, ten brothers from Bethel began to study the language and were assigned to attend the Cambodian meetings.

Although the largest foreign-language group in Japan is Korean, most of them understand Japanese, so for years there was no separate congregation for them. In time, however, it was pointed out that the Koreans living in Japan could grasp the truth quicker if they studied it in their native tongue. This led to the formation of a Korean group near Bethel in April 1996 and, later, a group in Itami City, Hyogo Prefecture.

Not to be overlooked are the sign-language congregations. Many willing volunteers have learned Japanese sign language in order to help hearing-impaired people throughout the country. Since 1982 the Society has organized sign-language interpretation at certain district conventions. However, concerted efforts to help the hearing-impaired began in 1992, when sign-language congregations were formed in the cities of Fukuoka and Kumamoto. Sign-language videos have also been prepared. Now there are 11 congregations and 9 smaller groups throughout Japan that are actively helping hearing-impaired people.

Thus Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan have made a fine effort to reach out and assist the many language groups in the country to benefit from the good news in the language they understand best.

Enthusiasm for New School

In 1993 an exciting new opportunity opened to single elders and ministerial servants in Japan. It afforded opportunity for them to expand their service both within the country and abroad. James Hinderer and David Biegler, two brothers with decades of experience in the traveling work, were sent from the United States to conduct the first class of the Ministerial Training School in Japan. There were also present for

this first class, conducted in English, seven observers from Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines. These observers were being prepared to serve as instructors in their respective countries.

In talking about how they benefited from the school, one of the students in the first class said: "Many of us, I think, had difficulty reasoning for ourselves and making decisions by applying pertinent Bible principles. We were more comfortable with rules. But during the school, by two frequently used questions, 'Why?' and 'How?' we were trained to mull over the reasons behind the facts and the answers." Echoing the same point, another student in the class recalls what occurred when one of the instructors suggested that the ministerial servant who cares for the magazines could prepare a magazine presentation for use in offering the newly arrived magazines and then share this with the publishers. A question about this by one of the students prompted an impressive clarification of the difference between righteousness and goodness. The instructor explained: "Righteousness fulfills the written instructions, but goodness goes beyond what is required in order to benefit others. We need to be not only righteous but also good and do whatever we can to benefit the congregation members, without a written code."

The young single brothers in Japan are generally not in a hurry to get married. Those in the first 18 classes averaged 29 years of age, 13 years in the truth, and 8 years in the full-time service. By August 1997, more than 790 students had graduated from 33 Ministerial Training School classes, with thousands more waiting to attend. Upon graduation, some received assignments in the circuit, special pioneer, and missionary work.—Ps. 110:3.

The benefits are immediately felt when these well-trained elders and ministerial servants work with the congrega-

tions. One elder, commenting on the good influence a graduate had on their congregation, said: "The congregation has become much livelier and brighter. The pioneer spirit increased, and all the congregation members gained a deepened appreciation for the importance of doing things according to the theocratic procedure. The enthusiasm of the youths for spiritual matters was heightened, and many joined the Theocratic Ministry School." Thus, the congregations have been strengthened and built up.

Sending Delegates to Overseas Conventions

There have been many opportunities over the years for Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan to "widen out" in expressing love for the international brotherhood. (2 Cor. 6:13) As travel abroad became more affordable, the Society invited the Japan branch to send delegates to special international conventions held in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, Hawaii, and New Zealand.

The number of delegates responding to the invitations increased over the years, and it was not unusual to find large numbers of pioneers and other full-time ministers among the delegates. In 1996, when special conventions were held in the Czech Republic and in Hungary, there were 1,114 full-time ministers among the 1,320 delegates from Japan.

What the Japanese delegates saw and heard at these special conventions broadened their viewpoint and gave them further impetus to serve Jehovah wholeheartedly. Shi-geo Ikehata, who visited the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Taiwan for the 1978 international conventions, explains: "I was deeply impressed by the bond of love that existed among brothers and sisters in the foreign countries. Seeing firsthand that Jehovah's Witnesses are bound together by the pure language has especially



Japanese delegates at overseas conventions:
(1) Kenya, (2) South Africa, (3) Russia

influenced my appreciation for my service privileges and the content of my prayers.”

By visiting countries where Jehovah’s servants had withstood severe persecution and by hearing their experiences firsthand, the delegates were moved to want to imitate their faith. Misako Oda attended the first international convention in the former Soviet Union, in St. Petersburg, in 1992. She recalls: “When the opening song started on the first day

of the convention, a Russian sister sitting next to me began to weep. Looking up I could see many other Russian sisters with tears in their eyes, not able to finish the song. I thanked Jehovah deeply for his undeserved kindness in allowing me, someone who has not experienced the sort of persecution that they had undergone, to be there with them and to share that historic moment of victory for Jehovah and for the faithful brothers.”

A young pioneer sister, Seiko Namba (now Nakajima), recalls well the Buenos Aires convention in 1990. She says: “I learned from the brothers and sisters in Argentina how to express love and appreciation as well as the importance of showing such emotions to others. One elderly sister hugged me when we were leaving and gave me a present. She was in tears, saying, ‘*Hasta luego en el Paraíso*’ [See you in Paradise] time and time again. After I came back to Japan, I tried to express the same love and kindness to the people in my congregation and territory.” Others of the Japanese delegates, though generally more shy and reticent, were also helped by association with their Latin-American counterparts to be more outgoing in expressing their love.

Over the years, the Japan branch has had the privilege of sending thousands of delegates to special conventions held in other lands. The overwhelming response when invitations are sent out to the congregations indicates the high level of enthusiasm and appreciation that the brothers have for this opportunity to be with their international Christian family.

Contributing to the Worldwide Need

It is a great privilege to be able to contribute now in various ways to the worldwide brotherhood. Having gained valuable printing experience, the Japan branch is able to assist



Branch office and Bethel Home in Ebina; inset shows additions being made in 1997



neighboring branches with their printing needs. More than 9,000,000 copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* are now produced each month at the Ebina factory in ten languages.

The Japan branch is now printing books, Bibles, booklets, and brochures in 26 languages, including Chinese, Lao-tian, Sinhalese, Tamil (for Sri Lanka), Thai, and 11 Philippine languages—all in full color. The high-speed offset rotary presses enable the factory to respond quickly to the needs in the field. In September 1993, for example, materials were sent to Japan for printing a special edition of the long-awaited Tagalog Bible that included the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. By the middle of October, 70,000 Tagalog Bibles had been printed and shipped, just in time to be released to the brothers at their district conventions in December. The Bibles in Cebuano and Iloko followed soon thereafter. Deluxe binding of the Portuguese and Spanish Bibles is also now handled in the printery in Ebina.

After the Translation Services department was established at the world headquarters in 1989, the Japan branch was invited to share in rendering assistance to translators throughout Asia and the Pacific regions. More than half of the world's population lives here, but many of the people, speaking scores of languages, do not yet have Watch Tower publications available to them. Japanese brothers who have translation skills and who are familiar with computer equipment have been privileged to visit India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Lebanon, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Solomon Islands, Guam, and other lands, to help find, train, and organize teams of translators as well as to install software developed by the Society to assist translators.

Mutual Encouragement

Not to be overlooked, too, are the 76 Japanese brothers and sisters who, in imitation of the missionaries serving in Japan, have eagerly accepted assignments to advance Kingdom interests in nine countries abroad. Included in this group are 13 graduates from the Ministerial Training School. The countries to which they have been assigned include Brazil (7), Cambodia (1), Guam (2), Malaysia (2), Nigeria (1), Papua New Guinea (11), Paraguay (8), Solomon Islands (5), and Taiwan (39). Letters received from those in their assignments indicate that they have successfully learned to cope with new languages, customs, and foods, and with tropical diseases, and they have also been willing to serve in primitive areas, at times without running water, gas, or electricity, in contrast to the affluence of modern-day Japan. They have developed a love for the local people and have learned godly contentment. They are delighted to be able to advance Kingdom interests in this way.

When theocratic expansion in Japan again made it necessary to enlarge the branch facilities, the work got under

way with international cooperation. The project includes 13-story twin residential towers and a 5-story services building. In 1994, Frank Lee, from the United States, was assigned to serve as construction overseer. Steve Givins, an international servant from the United States, also serves on the construction committee. More than 49 volunteers have come from Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, England, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and the United States to share in the work. These have all gladly sacrificed a more settled life in their home countries in order to share their experience and skills with their brothers abroad and to further Kingdom interests.

Outstanding too has been the overwhelming response by the Japanese brothers, as over 4,600 skilled and unskilled workers have submitted applications to work on the project. Most of them have to make big adjustments in order to work on the project even for a short period of time. It involves leaving jobs and families. But they feel richly rewarded for their efforts.

Older but Still Zealous

The growth of this great crowd of praisers of Jehovah in Japan started with the arrival of missionaries from the 11th class of Gilead in 1949 and 1950. Others joined them, including some from the 7th class and more from later classes. Fifty-nine of them are still in full-time service in Japan. Some of them are now in their 70's and 80's, and they are all still zealous in the service. Lois Dyer, after 64 years of determined full-time service, said: "I continuously pray with confidence as David so eloquently did, 'Just when my power is failing, . . . even until old age and gray-headedness, O God, do not leave me.'" (Ps. 71:9, 18) Jehovah has not abandoned these loyal ones who have spent the greater part of their life in faithful Kingdom service. One member of the missionary

family put it this way: "Jehovah's organization is like a mother who wraps us in a warm blanket and holds us close."

Twenty-one of these longtimers are now in the Tokyo Mita missionary home. The original building in Tokyo that housed the branch has been completely renovated to accommodate these missionaries of advanced years. It is an exceptional missionary family! They average 74 years of age and 50 years in the truth. Eight of them are from Gilead's 11th class. Together, the missionary family has given a heap of witness through the years, helping some 567 persons to learn the truth. Even though several members of the family are well into their 80's and are experiencing serious health problems, they are by no means idle. During the 1997 service year, they averaged over 40 hours in the field service per month and placed a total of 17,291 magazines and hundreds of books in their well-worked territory. These longtimers are honored by their congregation members and respected by their neighbors.

Ruth Ulrich, now in her 87th year of life, has spent 68 of those years in the pioneer and missionary work. She says: "It has been faith-strengthening to me to see all these people come out of pagan religions into the truth and really become our brothers and sisters."

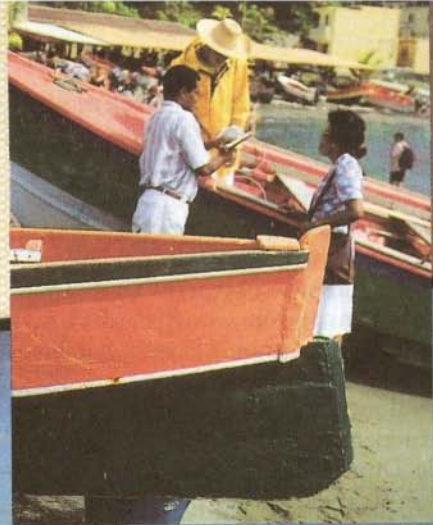
As we have looked through the "family album" that tells of the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, we have met many of these zealous servants of Jehovah. But these are only a handful of the more than 220,000 in Japan who are proclaiming the good news about God's Kingdom. The missionaries are deeply satisfied with the accomplishments of their spiritual children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generation. They also look forward with keen interest to seeing what role Jehovah will yet have them play, both during the closing days of the present system and in his marvelous new world, now very near at hand!

MARTINIQUE

AMONG people in many parts of the earth, the name Martinique rings a bell. It may call up a mental picture of sun, white-sand beaches, and azure seas. It may make a person think of such sweet things of life as sugarcane and bananas, also of rum. The picture may include black- or brown-skinned natives with broad smiles, offering trays of exotic fruits to visitors as a token of welcome. For others, Martinique calls to mind the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902 and the complete destruction of the town of Saint Pierre, which was then the economic and cultural capital of the region.

This island is, relatively speaking, only an insignificant speck of dust. It measures just 50 miles in length and 22 miles in width. Yet it has occupied a disproportionately large role in international affairs. Between the 17th and the 19th centuries, the colonial empires battled here mercilessly for supremacy in the Americas and the Caribbean. Saint Domingue (Haiti), Guadeloupe, Martinique, and other islands of the West Indies changed owners according to the outcome of battles.

For many decades Martinique, although but a tiny island, was a central point for slave trading in the Caribbean. One cannot speak about the Martinican population without referring to the chains of slavery





that shaped its past and that explain a great deal as to the present conditions of the people.

We are speaking of a people who, having been enslaved for a long time, are proud to be free. These are a people marked by strange paradoxes. They are jealous of their emancipation and want to make this known. At the same time, they conform to the French culture, which was imposed by colonization—a culture whose values and wealth are in most respects appreciated by the majority. The people claim as their own a religion—Roman Catholicism—that was imposed

on them by oppressive masters. Coupled with this is the fact that they have been taught to worship a God about whom they know very little. He is presented to them as a God who advocates Negro slavery because it is claimed that he cursed their race. He is said to have attributes of love and justice, but these qualities seem to be strangely masked. Theirs is a religion based essentially on rites and traditions wherein precise beliefs and theological analyses are of little importance. (In a similar way, it might be noted, the neighboring island of Barbados claims the Anglican religion because it was colonized by Britain.)

As this century nears its close, the majority of people in Martinique, though liking to view themselves as free, labor under the shackles of slavery to two demanding masters. On the one hand, they are burdened by a religious system of rites

and traditions that fail to satisfy real spiritual hunger. On the other hand, they labor without success to satisfy the endless cravings cultivated by the overwhelming influence of the materialistic way of life of Western civilization.—Eccl. 5:10.

Message of Priceless Freedom

It is on this tropical island that a message of freedom has been announced with increasing intensity during the past half century. This is the freedom to which Jesus Christ referred when he said: "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) This is a freedom from enslavement to falsehood, freedom from bondage to an economic system that cruelly exploits people, and freedom from sin and death.

The seeds of this truth started to be sown in 1946 when Georges Moustache, from Guadeloupe, spent two weeks witnessing in Fort-de-France and in Saint Pierre. Three years later, on August 9, 1949, four missionaries (a couple and two young sisters), graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, landed on the island. They were David and Celia Homer, Mary Lolos, and Frances Bailey. They were from the United States and spoke French, though not very well. In a year and a half, however, they managed to place 631 books and more than 200 booklets explaining the Bible, and they started 32 Bible studies with individuals and family groups. But the Catholic clergy, still very influential at that time and not at all willing to have their authority questioned, used their influence to have the missionaries expelled from the island in January 1951. For more than three years, all preaching of the good news in Martinique ceased.

Getting the Work Started Again

On July 10, 1954, Xavier and Sara Noll arrived from Marseilles, France. Both of them were full-time ministers, and

Xavier had been serving as a congregation overseer in Mar-seilles.

They can still remember their arrival on this island at what seemed to them to be the other end of the world, 4,400 miles from their homeland. They have not forgotten their first impressions of the heat and the humidity, nor have they forgotten the conviviality, hospitality, and good-natured manner of the people.

From the very first days, they learned how to live with a minimum of conveniences. After lodging for a few days with a man who was kindly disposed toward Jehovah's Witnesses, they found a new wooden house, but that simply means that it was a structure made with wooden walls and a wooden floor. Sheets of corrugated iron constituted the roof. There was no ceiling, and there were no toilet facilities. At dusk it was Brother Noll's chore to empty the "sanitary" pail in a ravine. His first trip with the pail was on July 14, the French national holiday. He had to cross a public square called Stalingrad, which was bubbling with activities connected with the holiday. As he walked through the square, with his pail exposed to the amused view of groups of people who had come out to relax and breathe some fresh air, they split their sides with laughter. It was a premiere! Never before had they seen a white man performing such a task!

A Surprising Welcome

Earlier that day Brother Noll had spent hours sorting out the books and booklets that the missionaries had left behind when they were expelled. Many of these had been damaged by insects, but there was a sufficient supply in suitable condition for the Nolls to use in their public witnessing when they started the next morning.

Martinique

*Xavier and Sara
Noll, the year
they arrived
in Martinique*



Here are a few of Brother Noll's recollections of that first day in service: "Going out in the preaching work for the first time here, my wife and I were anxious to come in contact with the people, to know them, to know what kind of welcome we would receive. The reality was beyond our expectations. We started witnessing in the center of the town, which at the time had a population of 60,000. That morning, my wife and I met twice as we were returning home to refill our witnessing bags with the books *'The Truth Shall Make You Free'* and *'The Kingdom Is at Hand'* as well as with booklets such as *'The Prince of Peace.'*"

Householders would often say: "I'll take your book as a record of your passing," or, "If this speaks about God, I'll

take it." During the first two weeks, almost 200 books and hundreds of booklets were placed. It was easy to start conversations because the people were curious and were willing to welcome strangers. What encouragement it was to be received so hospitably!

Brother and Sister Noll wondered whether they would be able to study with so many people! But they learned quickly that they had to differentiate between those merely showing natural hospitality and those with a real desire to know and put into practice the truth coming from God. There were some who wanted to learn. Brother Noll recalls: "The person who met us on arrival in Martinique introduced us to some workmen and apprentices in his cabinetmaking workshop. We started a study that same night and two more during the first week."

One of those studies was with a young couple, Paul and Nicole Jacquelin. They were studying three times a week and making good progress. Soon they were sharing with the Nolls in witnessing from house to house. With these new publishers, the preaching work started to take on local color.

"To-To-To"

On arriving at a house, one had to shout, "*To-to-to*, anybody home?" From inside, often enough, a voice answered: "What for?" After the publisher shouted out again to introduce himself, the householder would reply, "Come in and sit down." Interesting conversations ensued.

Most of the time, people were willing to converse. Stress was unknown in Martinique in those days. Rare were those who said what we hear constantly today: "I have no time." However, the conclusion frequently was: "I understand all that you're saying, but I'm not going to leave the religion of

my parents and my grandparents." Even where there seemed to be some interest, so that the publishers asked, "Could we see you again soon?" the answer was often: "If it's God's will."

In general, the people expressed great respect for the Bible. Yet very few of them had one. The Catholic clergy tried hard to prevent people from having any contact with the Bible. Nevertheless, a few people had been able to get the Protestant French translation by Louis Segond. Some had obtained it from peddlers, others from neighbors who were Seventh-Day Adventists, and still others, more rarely, from the Evangelicals.

The Clergy Manifest Alarm

Five months after Jehovah's Witnesses resumed their preaching activity in Fort-de-France, a newspaper put out by the Catholic Church featured the question "Who Are Jehovah's Witnesses?" It set out a dialogue between a priest and a parishioner: "Do you know Jehovah, Father?" "Indeed! You speak Hebrew now?" And then followed a litany of slander against Jehovah's Witnesses and a malicious misrepresentation of their teachings. A caricature of Sister Noll even appeared in a church pamphlet.

Sometime afterward, although there were but a handful of Witnesses on the island, a priest, who was obviously distressed by the zeal of these Kingdom preachers, declared: "Thousands of good people are in the process of becoming Jehovah's Witnesses because they are not well acquainted with their own religion." It was as Jesus Christ had illustrated in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The common people were longing for spiritual crumbs from the table of the prosperous clergy.—See Luke 16:19-31.

The Visit of Notre Dame du Grand Retour

A few years before, in 1948, the faith of many Catholics had been shaken. A grand hoax had been organized by the bishopric. A statue of Mary was brought over from France amid much ceremony. It was driven throughout Martinique and was extolled by the population to an extent unequaled even to this day. The image of the "Virgin" was placed in a small boat mounted on wheels, and this was moved through the streets. Along the way, the people filled that boat with money and jewelry for the "Madonna." At that time Martinicans, whether rich or poor, wore only gold jewelry. As a result, what was collected represented a large sum of money.

There are many who still vividly remember what occurred. Marthe Laurent, who is now one of Jehovah's Witnesses, recalls the arrival of the "Madonna." "It was on a Saturday night early in March 1948, in the public square surrounding the Savannah in Fort-de-France," she says. "The square was full of people when suddenly we saw a small light appear on the sea, at the tip of La Pointe des Nègres. The immense crowd was seething with excitement; the 'Virgin' was arriving by boat!" Pierrette Hantoni went again and again to deposit offerings. She and her husband decorated their house with flowers and hung a banner with the inscription *Chez Nous Soyez Reine* (Be the Queen at Our Home). In such an atmosphere, people got carried away and were very open-handed, thinking that the "Virgin" would perform miracles. For example, there was a man whose daughter was suffering from myopathy. On his knees he followed the small boat-on-wheels, hoping that the "Virgin" would cure his daughter.

In time it was reported that the statue had returned to France, but that was a deception. It was discovered later that the image had been hidden in a warehouse. According to lo-

cal rumor, a plane that disappeared at sea some time later was transporting the money and other possessions collected as well as the organizers of the hoax. In the minds of the majority, that was their punishment from God. Even today, when people speak about this event, Jehovah's Witnesses have an opening to show them what the Bible says about idolatry.—Ex. 20:4, 5; Ps. 115:4-8; 1 John 5:21.

Marriage, Not Simply Cohabitation

Some African customs survived slavery and were accepted by the Catholic Church as long as the participants also performed Catholic rites. In this atmosphere, cohabitation between people not married to each other was the order of the day. As Sister Noll shared in the ministry, people would ask her: "Do you have children?" When she replied, "No," they would ask, "And your husband?" It was not uncommon to find men who had children by women other than their legal wife. Those who wanted to become true Christians had to abandon such unscriptural practices.—Heb. 13:4.

The first one in Martinique who faced up to this need was a woman who had six children from three different men and was living with the father of her last child when she started to study the Bible. Marguerite Lislet quickly realized the enormous changes that she had to make if she was to be pleasing to Jehovah. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) She asked her common-law husband to leave, and despite having health problems, she courageously stood up to financial difficulties in order to take care of her six children. She got baptized in 1956. Later on, she became the first Martinican special pioneer.

Jeanne Maximin, who had borne children for her common-law husband, also wanted to get baptized. He had promised her many times that before the next assembly he would legalize their relationship, but he never kept that

promise. Finally, in 1959, when another assembly was approaching, she took advantage of his absence to move out of the house. On his return, what a surprise it was for him to see that she was gone and much of the furniture was missing! The neighbors did not hesitate to tell him where she was. He insisted that she return home and promised that they would get married in two weeks, during which time he would make the necessary arrangements. Her answer was clear: "The day we get married, I'll return, but not before." The necessary arrangements were made, and they were legally married within ten days. Many of our sisters have gone through similar experiences.

Jehovah's Witnesses have acquired the reputation of practicing a religion in which marriage is treated as a divine institution. A civil service officer of the village of Le Vauclin was surprised to see that in a short space of time, Jacques and Pierrette Nelson, local special pioneers, served as witnesses at the weddings of two couples who had been living together for many years without the benefit of marriage. That officer already had the book *Making Your Family Life Happy*, but now she promised to read it again because her situation was the same as had been the case with the ones that she had just married. Before concluding their discussion, she said in a relaxed tone to our two witnesses: "*Jamais deux sans trois*" ("Never two without three"). That proved true in this case, for not too long afterward, the pioneers were again before her, serving as witnesses for a third couple with whom they had studied.

Freed From Alcohol Abuse

Martinique is well-known for its rum. This alcoholic beverage made from sugarcane can be found everywhere on the island. It is enjoyed by many, but it can be so harmful if used

to an excess. In the 1950's a person could go into a bar and get a brimful glass of rum for only 50 centimes (about 10 cents, U.S.). A bottle of rum, a bottle of syrup, and a few slices of local green lemon were placed before the customer, and he was allowed to help himself.

Could Bible truth help people who regularly overindulged in rum? Yes, indeed! (1 Pet. 4:3) The first was a woman who regularly drank to the point that it was extremely unpleasant to sit opposite her and speak to her. In addition, she was living with a man to whom she was not married and who was enslaved to alcohol as much as she was. In a few months, as a result of what she learned in a home Bible study, she stopped drinking and left her common-law husband. All those who knew her noticed the changes. Her health got better. Her professional life improved, and her position as a civil servant was made permanent. When she received a sum of money as retroactive pay, she used it to attend the Divine Will International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York in 1958. To this day, although Elisa Lafine is 90 years of age, she shares regularly in the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom. She also is an example of fine Christian conduct. God's Word can truly free a person from enslavement to alcohol.

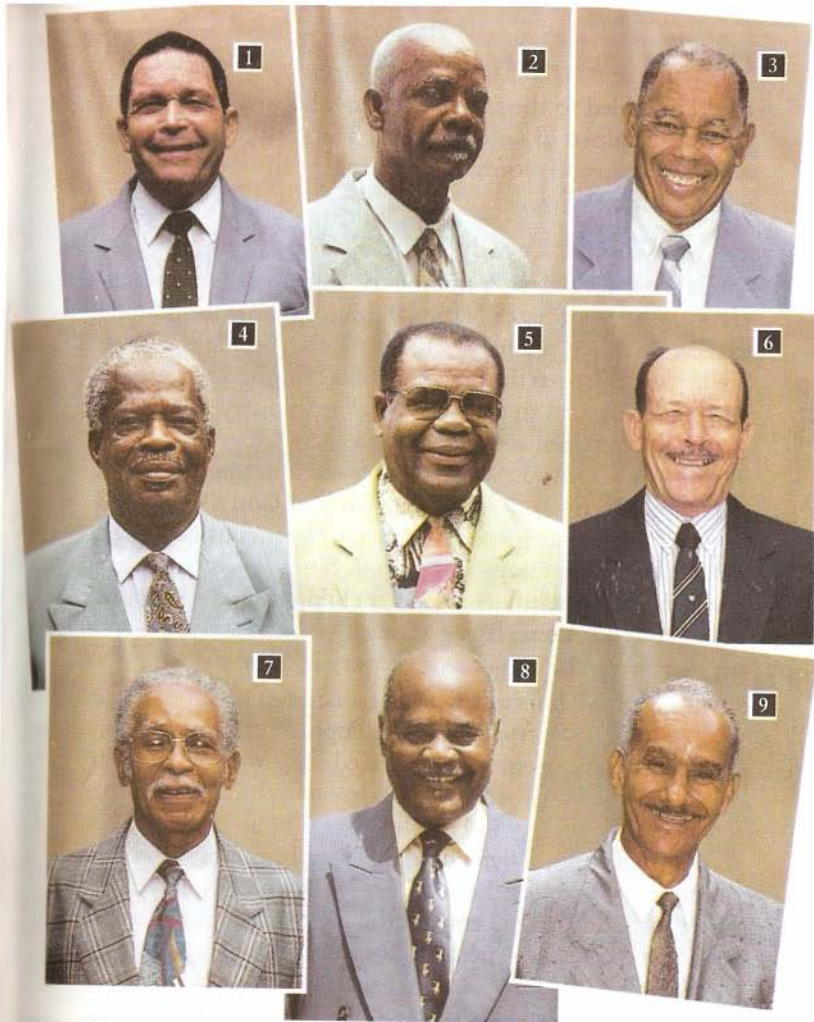
Fruitage From the Heart of the Land

On a map of Martinique, the island seems to curl around the bay of Fort-de-France. Without any doubt, it is here that the heart of the territory is situated. Along the north side of the bay, there are three overlapping urban agglomerations—Fort-de-France, Schoelcher, and Le Lamentin. Close to half the population of Martinique lives in this region. With the exception of agriculture, most of the island's activities are concentrated here. It was in this area that the preaching of the

good news was done first, and with just a few exceptions, the first publishers came from here.

As early as 1955, Brother and Sister Noll began to make trips outside the capital to spread the Kingdom message. They would spend the whole day preaching and return home in the evening. One week, on Friday, they would go to Le Lamentin. The next week, it would be the village of Le François, near the east coast. Little by little, people began to accept the truth. Among the first ones in Le Lamentin were Jeanne Marie-Annaïs, Suzanne Guiteaud, Liliane Néral, and Paulette Jean-Louis. In Le François, there were the Godard and Cadasse families and Pierre Loiseau. Some time later, special pioneers were sent to Le Lamentin. Among these were Valentin Carel and Nicolas Rénel. (Brother Carel later became a member of the Branch Committee.) There are now seven congregations in those communities and nearby to the south.

Certain ones seemed to start out well but later left the narrow road. They were overreached by the anxieties of life, materialism, and immorality. Many others received the word of the Kingdom into hearts that proved to be like good soil, which would yield fruitage for many years. (Matt. 13:18-23) The large majority of those who embraced true worship at an early date are still loyally serving Jehovah. Among these are brothers who got baptized in Martinique over 30 years ago: Leon and Christian Bellay, Jules Nubul, Germain Bertholo, Vincent Muller, Roger Rosamond, Albert Nelson, Vincent Zébo, and Philippe Dordonne. They all showed great love for Jehovah as they gave their youth in his service. They are no longer young, but all of them continue to serve as elders in the congregations. Others have died—among them, Tous-saint Lada, who is remembered by old-timers for his calm temperament and warm smile. There are many others who



Loyal, longtime servants of Jehovah: (1) Leon Bellay, (2) Jules Nubul, (3) Germain Bertholo, (4) Philippe Dordonne, (5) Roger Rosamond, (6) Christian Bellay, (7) Albert Nelson, (8) Vincent Zébo, (9) Vincent Muller

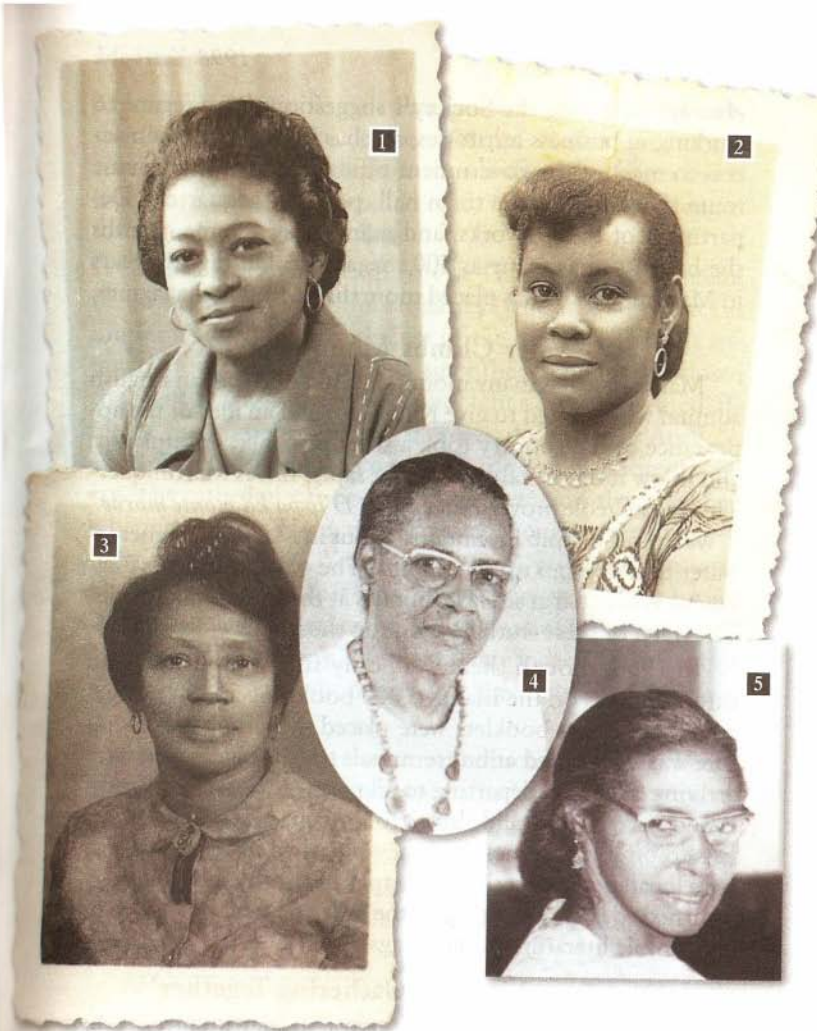
could be added to the list of veterans who were or who still are fine examples of faith and zeal. The younger generation is following in their footsteps, and for the older ones, this is a source of great joy.

Women Loyally Tell the Good News

In those early days, a number of sisters who were teachers with the Ministry of National Education were also doing excellent work as teachers of God's Word. Among them was Stella Nelzy. She was the first one of the group to be baptized, and she continued to be zealous in the ministry even while caring for her aged mother, who died at 102 years of age. There were also Andrée Zozor, who was a headmistress and who also effectively defended the truth of God's Word, and Sister Victor Fousse (now Lasimant), who remained steadfast in spite of strong family opposition. Sister Fousse's fine example had a good influence on her children. As a result, one of her sons has been serving as an elder for many years, and her daughter, Marlène, is a missionary in Mali.

Others have finished their Christian race because of age or illness. That was true of Léonide Popincourt, who had taken an early retirement and pioneered for 16 years. Though Sister Popincourt died in 1990, her daughter Jacqueline serves as a missionary in French Guiana. Emma Ursulet too set a fine example in defending Bible truth, and she especially endeavored to help her children walk in Jehovah's ways. Three of her daughters entered the pioneer service, and her son Henri serves as a member of the Branch Committee in Martinique.

Sara Noll, who came to Martinique as a special pioneer 43 years ago, is still zealous in full-time service at 82 years of age. Though the territory is worked often, she continues to have outstanding success in distributing *The Watchtower* and



Women who set fine examples as teachers of God's Word:
(1) Stella Nelzy, (2) Victor Fousse (now Lasimant), (3) Léonide Popincourt, (4) Andrée Zozor, (5) Emma Ursulet

Awake! Applying the Society's suggestions with regard to working in business territories, she has been able to gain access to most of the government offices. She has a magazine route that includes the town hall, police headquarters, Department of Public Works, and many others. Some months she has placed as many as 500 magazines. During her years in Martinique, she has placed more than 111,000 magazines.

Water Climbs Mountains

Martinique has many mountains. It is said that an English admiral who wanted to give King George II an idea of the appearance of the country took a sheet of paper, crumpled it, and threw it on the table. "Sir," he said, "this is Martinique." There is a Creole proverb that says, "*D'lo pa ka monté morne*" ("Water can't climb mountains"). But in Martinique, there is water that does go up mountains. The old town of Fort-de-France is situated at sea level but lies at the foot of many hills. The water of Bible truth has gone up those hills.—Rev. 22:17.

In 1956, though there were only seven publishers and three pioneers on the island, 5,000 books, over 9,000 magazines, and many booklets were placed. Much of that literature was distributed at bus terminals to passengers who were arriving from and departing to all parts of the island. Brother and Sister Noll would also go to the fish and vegetable markets to offer magazines, and they preached in the numerous bars located close to the marketplaces. In this way villagers returned to their homes up in the hills and beyond with precious Bible literature in their bags.

'Not Forsaking the Gathering Together'

Only a few weeks after their arrival in Martinique, Brother and Sister Noll began to encourage those who were studying to attend meetings. (Heb. 10:23-25) As a result, a few of them met in the living room of a simple wooden house at

Morne Pichevin in Fort-de-France. The room could accommodate only about ten persons. As the Nolls shared in the ministry, people would often ask whether there was a meeting place to which they could come. The missionaries longed for something more suitable.

Then a hotel manager in Fort-de-France, who still remembered the first Witness missionaries (who had stayed at his inn for a while), offered the use of the dining hall of his restaurant for Sunday afternoons, since the restaurant was closed that day. It was located on Schoelcher Street—named after the French politician who prepared the decree of April 27, 1848, which defined the conditions for the abolition of slavery. The cathedral was on the same street. Now that they had a better meeting place, the Witnesses thought that scores of people would come. Yet for some time, just 5 to 10 assembled there, in a hall that could hold more than 100 persons. When they invited others to come, the answer usually was: "I'll come, God willing." But it was rare indeed when anyone really thought seriously about what the Bible says God's will in this matter is.

However, Mrs. Marceau, a retired schoolteacher, would first attend church services at the cathedral and then regularly come to listen to the Bible's message. Alice Lassus, who did cleaning at the cathedral, also attended these meetings. They both became loyal Witnesses of Jehovah. But really the Witnesses needed a meeting place that was better suited to the size of the group.

After a few months, they moved their meetings to *Villa Ma Fleur de Mai* (Villa My Mayflower), at Clairière in Fort-de-France, which was then being used as a missionary home. Stella Nelzy, who began to attend meetings, was startled by a remark made there on one occasion. She later recalled: "The

chairman said: "This is the most important house in all Martinique!" But she added: "I soon afterward understood that he was right. The house was of humble appearance and was furnished with benches made of boards that had previously been used for framing, on which pads made of cardboard were put. However, in that house one learned about the marvelous purpose, the will, and the incomparable personality of Jehovah God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, it was truly the most important house!"

In 1960 the number of publishers had risen to 47. It was again necessary to find another meeting place with sufficient space. Adrienne Rudier offered us two rooms on the ground floor of her house at Bellevue. Two years later she proposed that we remove the remaining wall to widen our meeting place and that she move upstairs. The number of publishers had doubled in just two years. Now there were 94, and 177 home Bible studies were being conducted. Since some of the publishers were from the other side of Fort-de-France, it seemed wise to form a second group. This one met in Inoër Pui's home at Sainte Thérèse, a small community in the southern part of Fort-de-France.

Expansion continued. By 1964 we had an average of 157 publishers. To accommodate those who attended meetings, a house in the Bellevue area of Fort-de-France was purchased and was converted into a Kingdom Hall. Five years later a new Kingdom Hall was built in another part of town. Cesaïre and Elvire Quasima had kindly made available the flat concrete rooftop of their house, and the Kingdom Hall was built on that.

When Assemblies Were Small

The first assembly was held in 1955. It convened in the home of Brother and Sister Noll. To encourage the 5 Wit-

nesses in Martinique, 27 made the journey from Guadeloupe. The total attendance did not reach 40. But the assembly program provided an abundance of spiritual food. What a joy it was to be together in a spiritual and fraternal atmosphere!

In those days it was difficult to get meetings started on time. When people arrived late, comical situations sometimes resulted. During an assembly in 1956, a demonstration showed a priest, in typical fashion, going to someone's home to discourage him from reading the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses. A brother who normally wore a beard at that time put on a cassock to play the role of the priest. An interested person who arrived late did not realize that it was just a demonstration. After the meeting, he said with some feeling: "I disagree with what that priest did. Jehovah's Witnesses don't go to the cathedral to cause a disturbance, and the priest shouldn't come here to do so!"

Message of Freedom to the Northeast Coast

In time, more attention needed to be given to the parts of the island away from the capital. The west coast of Martinique is bathed by the Caribbean Sea, and its east coast by the Atlantic Ocean. As a result, the east coast is hit directly by the trade winds, causing heavy rains and high humidity. In the well-watered hills and plateaus of that region, everything grows—sugarcane, green vegetables, bananas, and other fruits. The large villages, which for the most part are aligned along the coast, depend on fishing as well.

This is also an area whose history tells of the slave trade and of the emancipation of the slaves. In the village of Le Lorrain, the names of certain areas call to mind that era, for example, Fond-Gens-Libre (Freed People's Valley) and Fond-Massacre (Valley of Massacre). Despite the abolition of slavery, when Jehovah's Witnesses took the message of God's Kingdom into this area, they found people still in need of

liberation. The people needed the freedom from false religion and superstition that is possible only by embracing Bible truth.

Images Smashed and Thrown Into the Street

The missionaries' first excursion to Basse Pointe, on the north coast, 30 miles from Fort-de-France, was on November 1, 1954. The road to this fishing and agricultural village was precipitous. It was in a bad state, especially after the rainy season, and at certain places the missionaries had to get off their small motorized bicycles and push them.

They were hoping to pay a visit to a school headmistress in the village. Earlier, she had been in touch with Jehovah's Witnesses in France and had a subscription for *Awake!*, but now her subscription had expired. The visit proved to be very beneficial. The lady explained that, although she had been a catechist, she had stopped attending church after the priest had spoken disrespectfully about the institution of marriage. She showed interest in what the Bible says about the soul and about eternal life in an earthly paradise. Shortly afterward, she returned to France, and there she dedicated herself to Jehovah and got baptized.

Back in Martinique, she was viewed as a prominent person in the community and was known as a devout Catholic. Imagine the commotion, then, after she returned to Martinique, when she smashed all her idols, small and big, and threw the bits in front of her house to be picked up by the garbage collection service. (Compare Deuteronomy 9:16, 21.) The priest was furious, so he prepared and delivered some hot sermons to scourge the behavior of this ex-Catholic. As a result, everybody was speaking about what they called the religion of Mrs. Cressan. For 42 years now, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Gabrielle Cressan, who is 88



| *First Kingdom Hall that was their own (in Fort-de-France)*

years of age, has applied herself to fulfill her dearest wish: "May each one of my heartbeats be to the praise of Jehovah."

Another Catholic woman, a neighbor who heard the priest speak out in such a virulent manner against Sister Cressan, decided to ask her what it was all about. This was Léonie Ducteil, mother of 11 children and wife of a local postman. Convinced that what she was learning from Sister Cressan was indeed the truth, she started studying the Bible with her children. During the years that followed, she as well as nine of her children became dedicated and baptized Witnesses. A number of years later, one of her daughters, Edgard, married Gérard Trivini, who in time became a member of the Branch Committee.

Ten years before Léonie Ducteil learned the truth with the help of Sister Cressan, one of their neighbors, Georgette Joseph, had heard the name Jehovah in a hymn, sung during

a ceremony at the Adventist church. The name had attracted her attention, and now a neighbor, Mrs. Ducteil, was telling her that some lady had just explained to her Jehovah's Word. Right away she wanted to know more. She, her eight children, and later on her husband all became Jehovah's Witnesses.

Those few families formed the nucleus of true worshipers on the north shore of the Atlantic side of the island. From Basse Pointe, in the following years, the seeds of truth were sown throughout the towns and villages on the Atlantic Coast. These grew and flowered in Le Lorrain, Marigot, Sainte Marie, Trinité, and Le Robert, as well as in Ajoupa Bouillon, Vert Pré, and Gros Morne, in the interior of the island.

Zealous pioneers contributed to the spread of the truth along the eastern coast. Osman Léandre, a widow, moved to Sainte Marie in 1965 and made her home available for meetings. Arcade Bellevue and Maryse Mansuëla, special pioneers from Guadeloupe, arrived in Le Robert in December 1967 and persevered in spite of opposition from the local Catholic priest. In 1970, Aline Adélaïde and Jacqueline Popincourt started witnessing in Le Lorrain, where Aline was able to use the Scriptures to help a former practitioner of sorcery to get free from demon control. Three years later they were joined by three others, Michèle and Jeanne Ursulet and Josette Mérine. These pioneers in Le Lorrain had left employment as schoolteachers to share in a far more important work of education—teaching truth that leads to eternal life.

Why Did the Priest Want the *Truth* Book?

Jeanne Ursulet relates: "In 1974 the Society sent us a letter from someone living at Le Lorrain. The man showed a keen

interest in receiving literature of Jehovah's Witnesses and in particular the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, which he had seen at someone's home. The following morning, we set out to find the man. His name wasn't familiar to us, and we had to ask a postman who it was. How surprised we were to find out that the letter had been sent to the Society by the parish priest!

"Wondering what sort of welcome we would receive, we went to the presbytery. The man introduced himself and told us coldly that he did not wish to speak with us, that he was only interested in the literature. We were perplexed. Some time after that visit, however, people of the community often told us that the priest had explained certain things to them in the same way we did. So we concluded that he was no doubt using our literature to prepare his sermons."

Groping for God and Really Finding Him

In 1967, four more special pioneers—Octave Thélise, his wife Alvina, and Elie and Lucette Régalade—started what became the Trinité Congregation. The day after Elie Régalade arrived, he went out preaching. Where did he begin? Passing over houses on the left and on the right, he went straight up to the door of a Mrs. Moutoussamy and knocked on it. He had never met her before, and no one had given him her name. But let her relate her story:

"From childhood, I was very much attached to my Catholic religion. I worked for many years in a day-care center that was managed by priests. But I was disappointed by the hypocrisy in the church. My attachment to it was weakening day by day. When the time came to enroll my two eldest sons for Catholic instruction, I was divided between the insistence of my Catholic in-laws, the opposition of my Communist husband, and the influence of my Adventist sister. I

Clergy Go on the Offensive

Everywhere in Martinique, the decrease of the clergy's control over a population whom they had held in ignorance was a source of anger to them. One parish priest expressed his fury when he encountered two young girls who were visiting relatives of a deceased neighbor in Basse Pointe, in 1956. Aware that the girls were studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, he denounced the girls as apostates and threatened them with hellfire because they had stopped attending Mass. When one of the girls replied quite firmly, he slapped her with his full strength and, heated up with anger, jumped into his jeep and left.

In Le Robert, after the arrival of two pioneer sisters in 1967, the priest forbade his parishioners to open their doors to them. One day, mad with anger, he nearly ran them down with his car. In parish leaflets, bitter and angry warnings multiplied, and from the pulpits, priests issued stinging anathemas against those whom they described as 'agents of Satan who had come to disturb the Roman peace.'

The other religious denominations joined in the attack. The Evangelical religions in particular falsely accused us of not believing in Jesus Christ. The Adventists denounced us for not respecting the Sabbath, whereas most of them only gave it lip service. For a time the brothers allowed themselves to be dragged into never-ending discussions with pastors of those religions. Often the discussions ended late at night and were to no avail. Gradually we learned, with the help of the faithful and discreet slave, to use our time to seek and find sheeplike ones who take real pleasure in listening to the voice of the Fine Shepherd.

Yet, those discussions did open the eyes of a few sheeplike ones. This was so in the case of Jules Nubul in Fort-de-France.



Moutoussamy family, all of whom are associated with the Christian congregation

didn't know what to do. I spent a great part of the night praying to God for help to find a solution. The following morning Brother Régalaide knocked at my door, introducing himself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He had come directly to my home. I was the first person to whom he spoke in Trinité."

Lisette Moutoussamy, as well as her ex-Communist husband, got baptized eight months later. Today, more than 30 years later, they are continuing to serve Jehovah with their entire family. Three of their sons serve as elders. Truly, when people earnestly grope for the true God, they will find him, just as the Bible says.—Acts 17:26, 27.

The territory proved to be fruitful, and congregations developed. One in Trinité, and from it six others—two in Le Robert, one in Sainte Marie, one in Gros Morne, one in Vert Pré, and another in Trinité. They all continue to grow, bringing honor to Jehovah.

He noticed that the pastor was merely pretending to quote the Bible—but was really making up the passages—in an effort to support the teaching that Christians must keep the Sabbath. (Compare Romans 10:4; Colossians 2:13-16.) Now Brother Nubul is an elder among Jehovah's Witnesses. Gertrude Buval of Trinité, who was a Seventh-Day Adventist, saw the dishonesty of her pastor during a discussion with Octave Thélise, who was serving there as a special pioneer with his wife, Alvina. Years later, in spite of advanced age and poor health, Sister Buval remains loyally attached to Jehovah's organization.

At the Foot of the Volcano—Would They Listen?

In the northwestern part of the island, the towns of Saint Pierre, Le Prêcheur, Le Carbet, and Le Morne Rouge are all situated right around Mount Pelée, which was made sorrowfully famous by its destruction of Saint Pierre and its 30,000 inhabitants in 1902.

Regarding the eruption on May 8 of that year, people remember primarily that the inhabitants of Saint Pierre ignored warnings and refused to flee. For a month the volcano had been belching forth smoke, ash, and bits of rock. Saint Pierre was covered with ashes. Twenty-five people had been killed by a mudflow. The people were apprehensive, but still they did not flee. In part it was because of their own fatalistic attitude; in part it was because the leaders of the people, including the clergy, urged them to stay. Those same factors influence the reaction of many to the warning of the impending fear-inspiring day of Jehovah.—Joel 2:31, 32.

Many of the people of Martinique are fatalists, and when faced with difficulties, they shrug their shoulders and say: "It's God's will." Often we try to help them reason on this matter by discussing what happened at the time of the erup-

tion of Mount Pelée. "If such events are 'God's will,'" we ask them, "why was the only survivor of this catastrophe a habitual prisoner who was put in solitary confinement in an underground dungeon of the prison, whereas all the 'good Christians' and the churches with their 'saints' were destroyed?"

Early in the 1960's, the publishers from Fort-de-France began to travel fairly regularly to the communities in the vicinity of the volcano to bring them the Kingdom message. However, people were strongly influenced by fear. They wondered, "What will people say?" Because of fear of being rejected by neighbors, nobody wanted to identify himself with Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1962 the Charpentier family from France came to live at Le Morne Rouge, just northeast of Saint Pierre. The wife, Madeleine, was a special pioneer. For many years she and her husband, René, sowed the seeds of Kingdom truth in this area.

However, church influence is still strong in the northern part of the island. There are some large plantations managed by wealthy landowners, descendants of the first settlers, and they live hand in hand with the Catholic clergy. In all Martinique the number of these local whites who have accepted the truth can be counted on one's fingers.

Freed From the Fear of Man

Although the general population was reluctant to be identified with Jehovah's Witnesses, in the mid-1960's a man and his wife, Yoland and Bernadette Hortance, began to be deeply moved by love for Jehovah and for his Word. What tests of faith did they face? They relate: "As we were the first to accept the 'new religion,' we found ourselves on the fringe of society. We went through a period of trialsome times. In the space of one year, we lost two children through accident,

which led people to say that God was punishing us for having abandoned the Catholic religion. But what we had already learned about Jehovah helped us to keep steadfast.”

After all of that, Yoland’s employer, a *béké* (local white), under the influence of a priest, threatened to fire him if he did not return to the church. However, Yoland stood fast, and because our brother was a conscientious worker, his employer did not carry out his threat. Though they both have been through other difficult times, Brother and Sister Horntance continue to be loyal servants of Jehovah.

In 1968 the Palvair family moved from Fort-de-France to Le Morne Rouge. Gradually, others embraced true worship. Today there is a congregation of 60 publishers in Le Morne Rouge.

Additional Help Within Sight of the Volcano

Starting in 1972, two special pioneer sisters, Anne-Marie Birba and Arlette Girondin, worked courageously to help the people of Saint Pierre, Le Carbet, and Le Prêcheur. Although they brought a message of peace, at times the people threw stones at them and hit them with brooms. In that area many women who accepted the truth underwent severe opposition from their husbands, but as a result of the good conduct of the wives, little by little, the husbands generally became more tolerant.—1 Pet. 3:1, 2.

An elderly Witness, Jules Martinon, was an example of perseverance, serving in Saint Pierre for over 20 years. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, meetings in this area were held in facilities that were just tolerable. However, devoted brothers such as John Chavigny and then, later on, the Lemoine and Papaya families helped to develop a fine congregation in Saint Pierre. A beautiful Kingdom Hall able to hold 200 persons



| Mount Pelée, with Saint Pierre along the water

is evidence that Jehovah’s Witnesses are firmly established at the foot of the volcano.

A Night in the Mango Tree

The Kingdom message had reached Le Lamentin as early as 1955, but severe tests continued to face those there who sought to worship Jehovah God. This was not always because of the clergy. Martinican men are generally proud of their masculinity, and many of them are quite domineering toward their wives. When a woman wanted to worship Jehovah, she often had to face up to violence from her husband.

One of our sisters in Le Lamentin relates: “In 1972 when the Kingdom message was brought to my home, it was the answer to all I had longed for. But my husband forbade me to study. Nevertheless, I continued studying secretly. When he found out, he burned my Bible and my study book and beat me. He decided that we would move, hoping that this would put an end to my interest in the Bible.



Forty-six congregations are distributed among the locations named

"When I started attending meetings, he used to lock me out. I often had to sleep under the veranda. Then he destroyed everything that could serve as shelter to me, even the henhouse. He beat me often, and many times I had to go without food. Once, he chased after me in the middle of the night with a cutlass! To get away from him, I had to run through the bushes and climb a mango tree as quickly as possible. I escaped, but only because his flashlight had stopped working. He looked for me for hours, passing close to where I was hiding, curled up in the tree, praying. I spent that entire night in the mango tree." Nevertheless, in 1977 she got baptized. Later, her daughter too took her stand for Jehovah.

Freedom From Superstition and *Quimbois*

As people study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and apply what they learn, they experience freedom in a variety of ways. Many of the beliefs and customs of the Martinicans have roots in rituals and superstitions brought from Africa and later planted in the receptive soil of Roman Catholicism. Those who became Jehovah's Witnesses years ago still remember the superstitions from which they were set free.

They remember that on Good Friday, before doing anything else, a person was expected to kiss the cross. On that day it was strictly forbidden to use nails or hammers, in remembrance of Christ. It was also forbidden to dig the soil with a shovel or a fork because according to what they had been taught, the "earth will bleed." On the next day, Saturday morning, the ringing of the bells of the Catholic church was understood to result in a blessing to everyone. To benefit from it, after the bells rang, people were expected to plunge into water—the river or the sea. They would bathe their sick children, shaking those who were afflicted with rickets, to make sure that they too would benefit.

Others remember "the funeral ball" in which it was customary to participate when someone died. This was a very noisy wake, with drumming, dancing, and singing, as well as the relating of Creole tales. People believed that this would prevent the soul of the dead one from staying and wandering about in the house.

Although the people seldom read the Bible, many viewed it as a sacred object. They would keep it open in the house at a particular psalm, with a pair of scissors on it. This, it was expected, would protect the house from the spirits of evil.

They have not forgotten, either, the potions mixed by witch doctors. *Quimbois* is a Creole word that, according to some, comes from the French expression "*Tiens, bois!*" ("Here, drink this!") This is an allusion to the fact that witch doctors often give their clients magical potions to drink. Though the potions have little in the way of magical powers, many witch doctors become rich by dispensing them. Taking up true worship has meant freedom from all such superstition.

Attention to the South of the Island

Around the southern tip of the island are the coastal villages of Le Marin, Sainte Anne, and Le Vauclin, and a short distance inland is Rivière Pilote. These are the places that have caused visitors to view Martinique as an island with white-sand beaches and azure coral seas. They are also areas that have yielded praises of Jehovah.

The first of these villages to receive a witness was Rivière Pilote. How was that? Doctor Maguy Prudent had just finished her medical studies in France. Before her return to Martinique, Jehovah's Witnesses spoke to her about God's loving purpose for humankind. Thus, when she arrived in Marti-

nique, she contacted the Witnesses, and Sara Noll conducted a Bible study with her. In 1959 she got baptized. In connection with her medical work, Sister Prudent came in contact with a large number of people, even those from surrounding villages, and she shared with them the truths that she had learned from God's Word.

Publishers from Fort-de-France would also come into the area to give a witness. In those days very few Witnesses had cars, so they used to rent a "drum" (a small bus), so named because the shape reminded one of an oil drum. They started their full-day excursions by witnessing to people in the village and then went to those on the steep sides of the hills. The day's activity ended with a *Watchtower* Study in the shade of a mango tree.

Later on, special pioneers were sent into this territory. Among them was Marie Démas, who was 70, from metropolitan France. Her courage and sense of humor left a fine example for younger ones to follow. In 1963, Séphora Martinon and Georgette Charles, special pioneers, came to help the few publishers. However, it was not until the 1970's that the special pioneers in the neighboring villages of Le Vauclin, Le Marin, and Sainte Anne began to reap some fruits from their hard labor, and that was after years of sowing and cultivating. Among those pioneers were Stéphanie Victor and Monique and Eugénie Coutinard in Le Vauclin. Noteworthy is the courage shown by Eugénie, who remained physically disabled after extensive surgery. She walked with crutches and spoke with great difficulty, yet she continued to serve as a regular pioneer.

In 1966, two special pioneers were sent to Rivière Pilote—Anne-Marie Birba and Arlette Girondin—and a congregation was formed there within two years. In 1970, two others were sent to Le Marin—Hélène Pérasie and Thérèse Padra.

Up till 1975 a handful of brothers and sisters from communities in this area had to go all the way to Rivière Pilote to attend meetings. With Jehovah blessing the work, congregations were thereafter formed at Le Marin in 1979, Le Vauclin in 1984, Sainte Luce in 1993, and Sainte Anne in 1997. The brothers in all these villages now meet in beautiful Kingdom Halls, and flourishing congregations care for spiritual needs of people in these areas.

Accommodations for Larger Assemblies

It soon became necessary to have a more suitable place for circuit assemblies and for district conventions. The large halls available then were dance halls called *paillotes* (straw huts) because they were surrounded by plaited coconut branches. The old-timers remember the dance halls at Kerlys and at Serge Rouch, where our district conventions were held for many years. But in time this type of hall was no longer adequate.

Our brothers built a mobile steel structure, and with this it was possible to hold assemblies in the four corners of the island. Each village has its soccer field. So for years, at circuit-assembly time, we would set up our mobile Assembly Hall on the various playing fields of the island. What a fine witness was given! And how encouraging for the Witnesses in whose villages the assemblies were held!

For district conventions we made use of the indoor sports complex of the Louis Achille Stadium in Fort-de-France. We can still remember the “Victorious Faith” International Convention of 1978, when we were honored by having as main speaker John C. Booth, a member of the Governing Body. In one of his talks, Brother Booth declared: “We have no reason at all to lose faith in Jehovah’s organization,” and he added: “Our unmovable faith will be rewarded when we will tri-

umph victoriously. Jehovah will never disappoint his loyal servants.” The 2,886 persons in attendance were greatly encouraged by that program.

Bible Dramas Attract Attention

The first Bible drama, staged in 1966, made a lasting impression. There were no cassette players on which to run the drama tapes. The participants had to learn their parts by heart and speak them. That drama, about Jeremiah, lasted almost two hours! We had to synchronize the movements of the different characters with their use of the many microphones on their respective microphone stands. In addition to this, because of the limited number of Witnesses in Martinique at that time, some had to play various roles, changing costumes between the scenes according to the character to be represented. What work! But the audience was carried away with enthusiasm.

Then there were the sound effects. Backstage, a brother struck a sheet of corrugated iron to imitate thunder. From above the stage, while the lights in the hall were turned off, another brother used a flash camera to simulate lightning. On an island, news spreads quickly. When the public learned about the Bible dramas that we were having, the television station sent out representatives to film our rehearsals. Their broadcasting these gave fine publicity to the assemblies.

Tearing Down but Also Building

Beyond any doubt, the truth of Jehovah’s Word tore down many citadels of falsehood and superstition in Martinique. Jehovah’s anointed servants, like the prophet Jeremiah, are commissioned by God “to uproot and to pull down and to destroy and to tear down,” and also “to build and to plant.” (Jer. 1:10) Thus, in addition to exposing what God’s Word condemns, Jehovah’s Witnesses use that Word to help

humble ones “put on the new personality which was created according to God’s will in true righteousness and loyalty.” —Eph. 4:24.

As the number of people who responded appreciatively to God’s Word grew, other building work was also required. The number of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Martinique was growing—from 1,000 in 1975 to 1,500 in 1984, and then to 2,000 by 1986. Attendance at congregation meetings is frequently double the number of publishers, and more than that for the annual Memorial. To provide space for those who were attending the meetings, more Kingdom Halls were needed. Twenty have been constructed, each having a seating capacity of between 250 and 300. Suitable facilities for the branch office were also needed.

An Important Step

After years of diligent searching, the brothers found property on one of the hills overlooking the town center of Fort-de-France and providing a splendid view of the bay. An extraordinary experience was starting for Martinique.

The number of qualified workmen among the local brothers who could be available full-time was very limited. So the Governing Body authorized an arrangement for qualified Witnesses from overseas to assist. The first one to arrive, in February 1982, was Robert Weinzaepflen, an architect from France. A few days later, Sylvain Théberge came from Canada to supervise the construction site. The team was completed a few weeks later with the arrival of about 20 more brothers and sisters from Canada and some volunteers from Martinique. The local brothers supported this construction project not only by their devoted work but also by their generous donations, according to each one’s ability, some even offering their gold jewelry. What a fine witness



| Bethel family in Martinique

was given as a result of the zeal, unity, and love shown in connection with this project!

Did all the effort that was being directed toward construction detract from the public preaching of the good news in Martinique at that time? On the contrary, there was notable increase. In March 1982, there were 1,267 publishers active in the field ministry, 19 of whom were regular pioneers, and an additional 190 were auxiliary pioneers. As the project drew to a close, in 1984, the number of publishers had risen to 1,635, with 491 auxiliary pioneers in April. It was evident that Jehovah was blessing our efforts.

But progress has not stopped. At the dedication program, on August 22, 1984, John Barr, a member of the Governing Body, spoke on the subject “Moving Ahead With Jehovah’s

Organization.” He described the new four-story branch office and Bethel Home as being “a magnificent tool to face up to the increase and better serve Jehovah’s sheep.” Among those in the international audience present for the program were the four missionaries who had been expelled nearly 34 years before and who rejoiced at the evidence of Jehovah’s blessings on his servants on this small Caribbean island.

Valuable Help From Spiritual Men

Of course, the help provided involved more than buildings. Loving oversight was also given. For many years, up till 1977, the preaching work in Martinique had been under the supervision of the Guadeloupe branch. During this time traveling overseers, spiritual shepherds, were sent over from that sister island. The older heads remember Pierre Jahnke and Nicolas Brisart. Then, starting in 1963, it was Armand Faustini who regularly visited the congregations.

Following them, other traveling overseers, with varying styles and personalities, contributed to the spiritual upbuilding of the congregations. Xavier Noll shared in this service for many years. There was also Jean-Pierre Wiecek with his wife, Jeanine. David Moreau with his wife, Marylène, also visited congregations here as well as in French Guiana, which at the time was under the Martinique branch. When a branch was established in French Guiana, Brother Moreau, who had received training at the Martinique branch, was appointed coordinator of the Branch Committee in French Guiana. Claude Lavigne and his wife, Rose Marie, were serving as missionaries at Kourou in French Guiana when he received an appointment to do circuit work in Martinique, and now they are serving as missionaries in the Republic of Guinea. Others also served for shorter periods in the circuit work, but all of them are remembered fondly because of their hard work and loyal spirit. For those who were married,

their wives were precious companions and were good examples for the sisters in the congregations. Presently, Alain Castelneau and Moïse Bellay, accompanied by their wives, are visiting congregations in the two circuits, which congregations have, on an average, about five elders and seven ministerial servants.

Though Martinique is just a small island, loving oversight has been provided to Jehovah’s servants here by members of the Governing Body. Ewart C. Chitty, Daniel Sydlik, Karl Klein, William K. Jackson, Lloyd Barry, and Milton Henschel, along with other zone overseers, have come. The 12 brothers and sisters who live in and work at the Bethel Home, as well as the rest of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Martinique, highly appreciate those visits.

‘Jehovah Sees the Humble Ones’

The psalmist David wrote: “Jehovah is high, and yet the humble one he sees.” (Ps. 138:6) And the disciple James added that God “gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.” (Jas. 4:6) There is abundant evidence of that among those whom Jehovah has drawn to himself in Martinique.

Christian Bellay and his wife, Laurette, who were then living in Fort-de-France, have experienced such undeserved kindness. They were confused by the presence of various religions in Martinique. Which one was approved by God? When Christian Bellay read Revelation 22:18, 19, he felt that he had found a key to answering that question. Which religion neither adds to God’s Word nor takes anything away from it? After examining the facts, he became convinced that it is Jehovah’s Witnesses. He also realized that he had to apply the same rule in his own life—neither adding to God’s Word nor taking away, discarding or rejecting, any of it. Up till that time, he had been cohabiting without legal marriage, but in

1956 he legalized his relationship with Laurette. The wedding talk given on that occasion was the first one in Martinique to be delivered by a Witness. The following year, they got baptized in the Madame River in Fort-de-France. His brother Leon, his father, and his mother, also Laurette's brother Alexandre, all accepted the truth. Moïse Bellay, one of the sons of Christian and Laurette, presently serves as a circuit overseer. What an abundance of undeserved kindness from Jehovah that family has experienced!

Simple acts of kindness toward Jehovah's servants may open the way for blessings to the kindhearted one. (Matt. 10:42) That was true of Ernest Lassus, who had a jewelry workshop in Fort-de-France. He accepted the *Awake!* magazine regularly, not because he was personally interested, but more as a gesture of kindness. One day the Witness who delivered the magazines explained that only Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will be able to make justice prevail on the earth. This is what Ernest Lassus wanted. He agreed to have the Witness visit his home. A Bible study was started. "Now," he says, "I have everything I could wish for. Most of my children are in the truth; one of my daughters is in the pioneer work, a son who is a pioneer is also an elder, and an older son is a member of the Martinique Bethel family."

Determined to Serve Jehovah

It is encouraging to see younger ones turning to Jehovah and manifesting their appreciation for his loving guidance. Many of these were distraught as a result of lack of sound guidance in the world. But God's Word is helping them to learn the real purpose of life. (Eccl. 12:13) As they get to know what the Bible contains, they begin to discern that real benefit comes from heeding the counsel recorded at Isaiah 30:21, namely: "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people.'"

One of these, a ten-year-old girl named Claudia, asked numerous questions of the Witness who was calling on her family. Because of her father's illness, the study with her mother became irregular, but the girl continued to study and to apply Bible counsel that she had learned. She burned her catechism and her missal, and she destroyed her religious images. After her father's death, she refused to wear black mourning clothes, and she witnessed to those who wanted to pray for her father's soul. Showing a spirit like that of the Israelite girl who was a servant to the wife of Naaman, she encouraged her mother to attend congregation meetings. (2 Ki. 5:2-4) At the Kingdom Hall, the girl enrolled in the Theocratic Ministry School. She was soon sharing in the field service, and in 1985, at the age of 12, she got baptized, together with her mother. The mother freely acknowledged that her daughter had contributed greatly to her own spiritual progress.

Some young ones fearlessly seize opportunities to give a witness in school. A French teacher in Le François assigned her students to do research on the various religions in Martinique. Roselaine, then 18 years old, and a fellow student had the opportunity to give a good witness, making use of the book *Mankind's Search for God*. They placed about 20 books with students and teacher alike.

Even though the issues being discussed at school are viewed as highly controversial, young Witnesses here in Martinique have spoken up to make clear the high principles of Jehovah's Word. Mary-Suzon Monginy relates her experience: "One day, while dealing with the problems linked to overpopulation, the teacher mentioned the modern methods of birth control. The question of abortion arose and immediately gave rise to a heated dispute. I asked the teacher to allow me to present some material the following day to set out my viewpoint on the subject. He accepted, and for almost two

hours, we had a discussion with the entire class." Material was drawn from the *Awake!* magazine, including its "Diary of an Unborn Child," in the August 22, 1980, issue in French. The result was an improved attitude on the part of the class toward Jehovah's Witnesses.

Martinique has a young population. The youths in general are sucked hopelessly into the vacuum of an economic system that places unreasonable emphasis on material possessions. But Witness youths have come to appreciate spiritual values. It is heartwarming to see the Kingdom Halls in Martinique filled with young people who want to know Jehovah and his ways.

Freed From Enslavement to Drugs

As is true in other lands where materialism has suppressed spiritual values, many of the youths in Martinique have ruined their health and spoiled their lives by the use of crack and other addictive drugs. True Christianity, however, has freed some from these ruinous practices. Paul-Henri and Daniel, of Fort-de-France, used to be part of the Rastafarian community, where free use was made of marijuana. The Rastafarians had their own explanation of what the Apocalypse says about 'leaves for the curing of the nations.' But they did not even try to explain most of the rest of that Bible book. But Paul-Henri and Daniel wanted to understand it, and Jehovah's Witnesses offered to help them.

Paul-Henri and Daniel say: "We used to hesitate to attend the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, fearing an unfriendly welcome because of our physical appearance, which was rather repugnant." But when they did go, they were surprised by the kindness, the warmth, and the freedom from pretense among those they met at the Kingdom Hall. The following week they cut their hair and began to dress in a more present-

able manner. Within a short time, they also stopped smoking. Soon they too were sharing the good news with others.

Paul-Henri adds: "One day while I was doing street witnessing, an inspector of police, with whom I had previously had problems because of my use of drugs, shouted in stupefaction: 'But that's Grosdésormaux!' I took out of my bag, not drugs, but my Bible and magazines, which he accepted with joy, congratulating me and encouraging me to continue. That's what I did. I got baptized in 1984 and joined the ranks of regular pioneers in 1985. Today, married and a family head, I serve as an elder in the local congregation. My friend Daniel also made similar progress in the truth."

It is not only youths who want answers to the problems of life. Adults do too. With a view to helping all whose hearts were open to learn, between April and May 1995, the branch made available for distribution 250,000 copies of the *Kingdom News* entitled "Why Is Life So Full of Problems?" Since the island population was only 330,000, that meant that every adult, and many younger ones too, would be able to benefit from that important message. It opened the way for many fruitful discussions.

A circuit overseer reported that a woman from the countryside, after having read the leaflet, endeavored to telephone the Society's branch. In her haste she dialed the wrong number, but that number still proved to be a good one. The phone rang in a Kingdom Hall in Fort-de-France. Just then, publishers were preparing to go out in service with the circuit overseer. She asked: "Please, send me one of Jehovah's Witnesses as soon as possible. I want to study the Bible." The next day, she was receiving the help she wanted.

Our Assembly Hall at Last

Finding accommodations for our conventions was becoming a serious problem. The number who attended kept

growing. Furthermore, the sports hall in the stadium that we had been using for conventions was no longer suitable. What could be done?

At this time an elder from the Rivière Salée Congregation was searching for land on which to build a Kingdom Hall. Surprisingly, he was offered a site of about 15 acres—far more than was needed for a Kingdom Hall! Providentially, this was in the central part of the island. On the property, there was an old steel shed, which, though it had deteriorated, could be used as a temporary convention facility. In 1985 we held our first convention there. The attendance was 4,653, which was 600 more than the previous year.

Work on a new building got under way in 1992. A number of brothers and sisters from Italy came, at their own expense, to help with the construction. Local Witnesses contributed generously of their time and finances. The project has now been completed. This beautiful Assembly Hall can seat 5,000. It is, in fact, the largest auditorium in Martinique.

No longer do we have to postpone our assemblies—often at the last moment—because of deferred soccer matches. Furthermore, the hard work of putting up, taking down, transporting, and storing the mobile steel structures has also ended. Our Assembly Hall, located in surroundings of flowers, royal palms, and flamboyant trees, brings honor to Jehovah.

An Organization That Praises Jehovah

Jehovah has seen to it that over the past half century, true worship has taken root and flourished in Martinique. Through his organization, he has provided training for those who would be entrusted with oversight. Xavier Noll, along with his wife, received missionary training as part of the 31st class of Gilead. Later, Brother Noll was given further training in a ten-month Gilead course in 1964. This training proved



| *An Assembly Hall at last—in Rivière Salée*

to be most beneficial when the Governing Body decided to establish a branch office of the Watch Tower Society in Martinique in February 1977.

The first members of the Branch Committee were Xavier Noll, the coordinator, Valentin Carel, and Gérard Trivini. Later on, Armand Faustini, who has spent many years as a traveling overseer, was appointed. After Brother Trivini died and Brother Carel moved to France, Henri Ursulet was appointed, in September 1989, to be the third member of the Branch Committee. He was born in 1954, the

year that Xavier and Sara Noll arrived from France to devote themselves to the ministry in Martinique. From infancy, Henri had benefited from his mother's example of faith, just as was true of Timothy, an associate of the apostle Paul.—2 Tim. 1:5.

In 1975, there were 1,000 publishers and a total of 15 congregations on the island. During 1997 a peak of over 4,000 publishers was reached. All of these serve in association with 46 congregations. During the last 20 years, we have attained an average yearly increase of 7 percent.

Already there is 1 Witness to every 90 inhabitants in Martinique. Thousands of Bible studies are being conducted with interested ones. Jehovah's work is known throughout the island. His Witnesses are also well-known. It is becoming more and more difficult for others to say bad things about the Witnesses because there is always someone nearby to rebuke the slanderers. Witnessing done on the streets, in public squares, at marketplaces, and in car parks of hospitals and of large shopping centers is keeping the Kingdom message prominently before the people. And when people at home hear someone call out "*Tô-to-to, il y a du monde?*" ("Hello, anybody home?") they know immediately that Jehovah's Witnesses have come to speak about God's Kingdom.

In some parts of the island, it is not rare for territories to be worked every week now. When publishers go out in the field service, they may have just 10 or 15 houses assigned as their territory. In such areas, they witness to people who have heard the message time and again. This requires that the publishers vary their introductions and the themes that they discuss with householders. They need to make effective use of all the resources and suggestions made available by the faithful and discreet slave. Until recently, street witnessing was done quite sparingly in French territories, but now it is becoming an interesting and productive aspect of the ministry.

"*Si Bon Dié Lé*"

Martinicans regularly punctuate their sentences with the expression "*Si bon Dié lé*" ("God willing"). God's will is, of course, clearly stated in the Bible. Psalm 97:1 declares: "Jehovah himself has become king! Let the earth be joyful. Let the many islands rejoice." Psalm 148:13 adds: "Let them praise the name of Jehovah." And through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah extends the appealing invitation: "O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments . . . your peace would become just like a river." (Isa. 48:18) In his goodness, God's will is that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) God's will also is to free his creation, break its chains, and make the entire earth become a paradise inhabited by humans of all races and colors who are united in worship of their Creator. (Rom. 8:19-21) The opportunity to benefit from that loving purpose is still open for the people of Martinique.

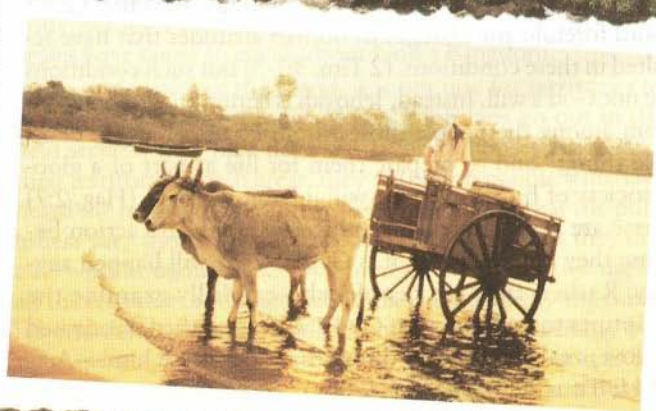
Martinique has changed greatly in the past ten years, as has most of the planet. Drugs, materialism, and moral decay have transformed what used to be an idyllic paradise. God's Word foretold the changes in human attitudes that have resulted in these conditions. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) But such conditions are not God's will. Instead, Jehovah is continuing to draw out from among the people those whom he describes as "desirable things" and to prepare them for life as part of a global society of his people who will inhabit Paradise. (Hag. 2:7) These are not people who indifferently take no action because they believe that if it is God's will it will happen anyway. Rather, they are people who carefully examine the Scriptures to find out what God's will is and then, motivated by love, zealously do the things that will please him.—Acts 17:11; Titus 2:13, 14.

PARAGUAY

IN THE heart of South America is the landlocked country of Paraguay. What does that name mean? Opinions differ, but a common local view is that it means "river that originates in the sea." Indians in the area believed that certain ponds in the Brazilian swamps, where the Paraguay River originates, were as extensive as a sea. The Paraguay River, which runs through the land from north to south, bisects the country. To the east of the river lie rolling hills, fertile fields with red soil, and thick forests. To the west is the Chaco, with sparse population in an area of coarse grass, scrub forest, and vast swamps inhabited by swarms of insects and a great variety of colorful tropical birds.

Paraguay is a land where modern technology contrasts with the simpler way of life of those who work the land. Jet airplanes and communications satellites have opened the door to the world's knowledge. High-rise buildings define the skyline of Asunción, the capital. Along the eastern border of the country, on the Paraná River, is located Itaipu, a hydroelectric plant with a power capacity unequaled by any other such plant in the world.

You may think of the country as being Spanish, but it was not always so, nor is it altogether so today. The early inhabitants were the Guarani Indians. In about 1520, Portuguese explorers under the



leadership of Alejo García were the first whites to enter the land. During the following decade, the Spaniards began to establish themselves in the area of what is now Asunción. The country remained subject to Spain until 1811, but the Guarani language was never replaced by that of the conquistadores. As a result Guarani, a beautiful language with melodious qualities, is the mother tongue spoken by the majority in modern-day Paraguay, and it occupies a place, along with Spanish, as one of the official languages.

A few decades after the arrival of European explorers, the Jesuits came to convert the Guarani to Roman Catholicism. At that time the Guarani had no images or temples. But the Jesuits gathered the Indians into communal settlements where they taught them Catholic rites and hymns while also teaching them trades and skills. The Jesuits used some of the proceeds of the Indians' labor to provide them with basic necessities of life, but they also used the arrangement to gain wealth and power. Many Spanish landowners envied this. They complained to the Spanish king, Charles III, about the growing power of the Jesuits. This complaint, not from the Guarani, but from Catholic colonists was a major factor leading to Spain's expulsion of the Jesuits from the empire in 1767. But the Catholicism that they had taught maintained its hold on the lives of the people. They adopted the outward forms of Catholicism while, in many cases, they also clung to some native beliefs. This encouraged an atmosphere in which superstition could thrive. With their acceptance of Catholicism, the powerful influence of the Catholic clergy also came into their lives.

That religious heritage did not bring peace to the land. Warfare has profoundly affected the history of Paraguay, leaving deep scars on the lives of the people. From 1864 until 1870, under Francisco Solano López, Paraguay fought against

Paraguay

*Juan Muñiz shared in
introducing the Kingdom
message to Paraguay*



Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. The results were disastrous. According to available records, the country's population at the beginning of the war was possibly a million or more. At the end it was said to be about 220,000, of whom at least 190,000 were women and children. Other wars followed; one involved a dispute with Bolivia over ownership of the Chaco, and others were due to political unrest. Perhaps it should come as no surprise, therefore, that in Paraguay those who wanted power over others frequently resorted to physical force to achieve their aims.

It was to this land that the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom was delivered, first by Bible tracts sent through the mail before 1914 and then personally in 1925 and thereafter. Thus water from another river, not the Paraguay River or the Paraná but "a river of water of life," began to become available here as it has throughout the earth.—Rev. 22:1.

Arrival of Kingdom Truth

Juan Muñiz was requested by J. F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Society, to move from Spain to

Argentina to organize and expand the preaching of the good news in that part of the earth. He arrived in Buenos Aires on September 12, 1924, and not long after that, he personally traveled into Uruguay and also into Paraguay to spread the Kingdom message. Seeds of Bible truth were sown, but little progress was made.

In 1932, Paraguay became involved in another war, this time with Bolivia. Once again the manpower of the nation was decimated. There were adverse effects on the country's economy and on the security of those who might come from abroad with the good news of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, with full-scale war in process, in 1934 the Argentina branch sent three of Jehovah's Witnesses into Paraguay to invite honesthearted ones there to drink freely from "life's water." These were Brothers Martonfi, Koros, and Rebacz.—Rev. 22:17.

Heated Opposition From the Clergy

"In October of that year," wrote Brother Rebacz, "we were ready to leave for the interior. We had two boxes of literature and a suitcase each. We traveled from Asunción to Paraguarí by train and from there, because of a lack of transportation, on foot to our first objective, Carapeguá, some 30 kilometers [20 miles] away. That night we slept on the ground, with the literature at our heads. When we started to witness the next day, the village priest visited the people telling them not to listen to us. Then he and a companion went by horseback to the neighboring village to tell the people there not to listen to us and to throw us out of town, which some of them tried to do."

With this pressure from the priest, placements of Bible literature were few, and even some of this was returned. From Carapeguá the Witnesses walked from one town or village to

the next—to Quiindy, Caapucú, Villa Florida, and San Miguel. To reach San Juan Bautista, they walked all day, kept on walking until midnight, slept in a field, and then continued on their way early the next morning. Arriving in town, they first visited the police to explain what they were doing. These men received the Witnesses with respect. Then the brothers spent a full day in the public ministry.

However, the next morning when Brother Martonfi stepped outside the hut they had rented, a surprise awaited him. He called out to Brother Rebacz, who was still inside: "Today we have something new." The literature that they had placed the day before had been torn to pieces and spread around their hut. On some of the pieces, insults and filthy expressions had been written, as well as threats that they were not going to leave town alive.

While they were eating breakfast, the police arrived and put them under arrest. What had brought about the change? Brother Rebacz later reported: "When we asked the reason, they showed us a newspaper in which we were accused of being Bolivian spies masquerading as evangelists. The director of the newspaper was the leading priest of the district."

The Return to Asunción

The two Witnesses were sent to Asunción as prisoners. It was a long trip on foot. As they traveled from one police station to the next, they were always accompanied by an armed guard. Along the road some people called out insults and threw debris at them. But the police treated the brothers respectfully, even saying that the charge of spying was ridiculous. At times the mounted police carried the brothers' luggage. One even let Brother Martonfi ride his horse, while he walked and listened to what Brother Rebacz was telling him about God's Kingdom.

In Quiindy, however, when the brothers were turned over to the army, the treatment became harsh. For 14 days they were kept in the guardhouse, ordered to sit on straight wooden chairs, forbidden to lie down or to stand up, insulted, and hit with a horsewhip. Later, in Paraguarí, they were taken to the train station in handcuffs under a guard of 12 soldiers with bayonets. There they were again turned over to the police for the remainder of the trip to Asunción.

The conditions under which they were imprisoned in the capital were also harsh, but they used the Bible that they still had in their possession and gave a witness to the other prisoners. After a week of detention in the capital, they were finally taken to the office of the chief of police. The minister of interior, Colonel Rivarola, was also present. (Later it was learned that when Colonel Rivarola had been apprised of the charges made against our brothers in the newspaper in San Juan Bautista, he dispatched telegrams to the military chiefs to make sure that the brothers were returned to the capital alive.) "Both men expressed regret over what had occurred," said Brother Rebacz. "They stated that, although this was a Catholic land, there was freedom of religion and that we were authorized to continue preaching from house to house as we had done but that for our own security, we should not leave the capital city."

When Brother Muñiz in Buenos Aires heard of the experience, he sent instructions for the brothers to return to Argentina until the end of the war. That came the following year. However, Brother Koros, who had not been with the two who were arrested, remained in Asunción.

Firstfruits of Paraguay

At about this time, one of the pioneers met a man who asked him for literature in Arabic for his father-in-law, an im-



Julián Hadad, one of the first to accept Bible truth in Paraguay

migrant from Lebanon. In this way, Julián Hadad received a book that he came to treasure. Convinced that he had found the truth, he began teaching it to his children. He also wrote to the Society to request literature that he could distribute to his neighbors. A few years later, a pioneer found Julián in San Juan Nepomuceno and provided further spiritual assistance. In 1940, the Hadads were baptized and became the first local baptized publishers in Paraguay. Since then Julián, one son, and several grandchildren have had the joy of participating in the pioneer service, Julián continuing to do so until shortly before his death, at the age of 77.

Meanwhile, the Chaco War had caused Juan José Brizuela to do some serious thinking about life. He had been wounded and taken prisoner by the Bolivians. As a prisoner of war, he had seen widows weeping for their fatherless children, and he had observed Catholic priests blessing Bolivian soldiers. He recalled that, as Paraguayan soldiers, he and others had received a similar blessing. He thought: "There must be something wrong. If God exists, this cannot be. But if God does exist, I'm going to look for him until I find him."



▲ Jóvita Brizucla, baptized
in 1946, still a special pioneer

Sebastiana Vazquez, serving ►
Jehovah since 1942



After the war, Julián Hadad met Juan José in Carmen del Paraná. From the Bible, Julián helped him find satisfying answers to his questions. As the apostle Paul said long ago, God has made it possible for humans who “grope for him” to “really find him.” (Acts 17:27) Soon Juan José realized that he had found the true God, Jehovah. (Deut. 4:35; Ps. 83:18) He got baptized in 1945; and his wife, Jóvita, in 1946.

Meanwhile, Bible truths were being discussed also at a vegetable stand in a market in San Lorenzo. It was not one of Jehovah’s Witnesses who was preaching there but simply a woman who had shown interest in what they were teaching. Sebastiana Vazquez, though illiterate, listened with interest. In order to progress spiritually, she learned how to read, and in 1942 she got baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Tests of Faith for a Small Group

The first congregation, or company as it was known then, was organized in Paraguay in 1939. There were just two pub-

lishers, but they were zealous evangelizers. They reported a total of 847 hours of field service and placed 1,740 books and booklets during that service year. They held meetings in a private home located on what is now called Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia Avenue (formerly Amambay) between Antequera and Tacuarí streets in Asunción. Only five or six persons came to those meetings in a room measuring about 12 feet by 12 feet. This location served well until 1944.

The following year the brothers began to use two electric transcription machines to broadcast recordings of short talks about various Bible topics. The clergy became so furious that they petitioned the government to prohibit all further activity by Jehovah’s Witnesses. But the Witnesses continued. It is evident that the clear, Scriptural discourses on those records were effective. During the next couple of years, good use was made of such recordings in various languages to reach communities of Polish, Russian, German, and Ukrainian immigrants who had settled in the southern part of the country.

The Golasik family, who lived in a Polish and Ukrainian colony near Encarnación, were among the first from this area to accept the truth. Soon Roberto Golasik, equipped with a phonograph and literature, was riding horseback to the various colonies to give a witness. At first, meetings here were held once a month, then twice a month, and later once a week. At times people from five different language groups would be in attendance, but all were slowly getting to know the pure language of Bible truth.—Zeph. 3:9.

Sadly, not all who had a part in giving a witness at that time continued on the narrow road leading to life. The overseer of the Society’s literature depot in Asunción began to advocate personal views. When he defected from Jehovah’s organization, others too forsook Jehovah’s service. The

number of Kingdom proclaimers dropped from 33 in 1943 to 8 in 1944. What now? Jehovah blessed those who showed themselves to be loyal Witnesses, and the organization began to grow once again.—Ps. 37:28.

Missionaries Learn About Local Ways

With loving concern for the welfare of the flock in Paraguay, the branch office in Argentina sent Gwaenydd Hughes to oversee the work. When he was invited to attend the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in 1945, arrangements were made to send in Ieuan Davies, with his wife, Delia. However, because of a delay in getting needed travel papers for them, Hollis Smith, a graduate of Gilead School, arrived first and was on hand to greet Brother and Sister Davies when they reached Asunción by riverboat late in 1945. A few days later, Albert and Angeline Lang, also graduates of Gilead, arrived by plane. More followed. A home was rented that could accommodate the missionaries and also provide a place for the local congregation to meet. All the missionaries were eager to serve, but of course, they needed to get acquainted with the way of life of the people.

They found that the people were very religious, though lacking in knowledge of the Bible. Each city had its patron “saint,” usually identified with the “Virgin Mary.”

As they came to know the customs of the people, they found many of these appealing. In the marketplace were mounds of fruits and vegetables, with women balancing heavy loads in wide baskets on their heads. In shops there was handmade lace known as *nanduti*, which is so delicate and fine that it is not unlike a spiderweb. They also quickly observed that people started their work early and that at midday everything closed down for a siesta during the hottest part of

the day. When the missionaries called at the homes of people to share the Kingdom message, they learned to stand at the gate and clap their hands and to enter the yard only after being invited. They could not help feeling the friendliness, simplicity, and warmth of the people. But they also needed to learn to communicate with them in their language—not only Spanish but also Guaraní.

In April 1946, shortly after the missionaries came, Brother and Sister Davies were reassigned to Argentina. Pablo Ozorio Reyes, who had been attending meetings for just a few months, was appointed to conduct the *Watchtower* Study even though he was not yet baptized. Why so soon? Because he could speak the language and had made good spiritual progress. But he faced challenges. Later, Brother Ozorio wrote: “Shortly after my appointment as *Watchtower* Study conductor, I had to correct a wrong comment that had been given. The one making the comment flew into a rage and challenged me to a fight right then and there. Of course, I refused, and a missionary helped to calm the situation. There is nothing better than a bit of responsibility to help one mature.” Sadly, the one with the explosive temper later forsook Jehovah’s service.

Building Up the Organization

Before the end of 1946, larger facilities were needed for use as a center for theocratic activity. Six more missionaries had arrived—William and Fern Schillinger, with four others. A house with a large yard was rented on Mariscal López Avenue. The building was located directly across from the Ministry of Defense. The large “Kingdom Hall” sign was prominently placed on the front gate so that anybody who had dealings with the military division of the government could not help seeing it.

William Schillinger served in Paraguay as a missionary for 40 years, until his death



On September 1 of that year, the Society established a branch in Paraguay, and the recently rented building provided a place for the branch office. With improved organization, the intensity of the witness given increased, but so did opposition. It seems that the clergy were using the confessional to obtain information and to instill fear so as to deter Catholic mailmen from delivering Watch Tower literature.

In November, Brother Hughes came from Argentina to visit and upbuild the four small congregations that were then functioning. He had been to Gilead School and had attended the international Glad Nations Theocratic Assembly in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., where sessions were held in 20 languages and where 80,000 people packed into the stadium on the final day to hear talks. So he had much to share with the brothers. They needed that upbuilding in order to keep on serving in the face of adversity.

In the Midst of Revolution

Early in 1947, revolution broke out. Government forces placed machine guns on the sidewalk in front of the missionary home. After one day of fighting, a measure of stability re-

turned. Then on March 7, the situation again became serious. There was open warfare on the streets. Martial law was declared. The police headquarters in downtown Asunción was stormed by the rebels.

Anticipating that the main army headquarters would also be attacked, the general in charge requisitioned the missionary home for military use and gave the brothers three days to vacate. On appeal, this time was extended to ten days. In the midst of a revolution and during a time of extreme housing shortage, the brothers found themselves in a campaign of their own: Operation House Hunt. It appears that Jehovah wanted the high authorities of Paraguay to continue to be aware of the presence of his Witnesses. The only suitable house that was available was situated right next to the presidential home, on embassy row.

As to the revolution, in a letter of March 26, 1947, the branch servant wrote: "The situation is getting worse here daily. At this writing there is an airplane overhead several miles off, bombing the airport, I believe. It is being attacked by antiaircraft guns. There are hundreds of soldiers around the president's home, and the noise from their guns is terrific. The air is blue with gunpowder smoke, and the smell of it is obnoxious. The revolutionary forces are getting very close to the city; we can hear the continual rattle of guns and bombs . . . The food situation is getting worse daily."

The revolutionary forces reached to within ten blocks of the missionary home before government forces started to drive them back. During all this time, the brothers carried on their witnessing the best they could. The revolution continued for about six months, and it proved to be a real trial, especially for local brothers. The authorities treated them harshly because they were maintaining Christian neutrality.

Not Failing to Assemble Together

When the revolution was over, the country began to return to normal, and some who had fled to Argentina came back. Plans were made to hold an assembly, the first one in Paraguay, on June 4-6, 1948. But the Devil was busy causing turmoil. On June 3, there was a military coup. The president and his cabinet were taken prisoner. There was great confusion in the capital. What about the assembly?

Attempts to rent a suitable hall had failed, but Jehovah had made another provision. The former missionary home across from the army headquarters was vacant. The owner had agreed to rent it to the brothers for their assembly. This was away from the city center, where the turmoil was. The yard could be used for assembly sessions, and the building could house out-of-town delegates. Those who came greeted one another with handshakes for everyone, in true Paraguayan fashion. Over one hundred were on hand to hear the discourse "The Coming Gladness of All Mankind." What a timely discourse for people in Paraguay!

Police Held the Mob at Bay

Since Jehovah's Witnesses first began to carry on their work of Bible education in Paraguay, there has frequently been opposition from the religious clergy. In 1948, in the little town of Yuty, in the southern part of the country, the circuit overseer planned to give a public talk in the small park in the center of town. This was just across from the Catholic church. The local priest urged the people to stop the lecture, declaring that the Witnesses were going to break up the church and take away their religion. Before the discourse was to begin, a large mob formed in front of the church. On seeing Jehovah's Witnesses—eight of them—in the park across the street, they began shouting: "Away with the Protestants!"

Away with the Protestants!" Meanwhile a good-size group of people were waiting to hear the talk but were afraid to enter the park because of the mob.

The police placed a machine gun in front of the mob and said that if anyone crossed the line, they would fire. This held the mob in check until the brothers were able to move safely out of the area. However, they had been advertising the talk all week and were determined to give interested ones an opportunity to hear it. A local Witness offered the use of his home. After the talk had been given once, another group arrived and made it known that they too wanted to hear it; so the circuit overseer gave it twice that day. There in Yuty, the contrasting fruitage of two forms of worship was becoming clearly evident.

Missionaries Faced With Deportation

On an official level, Paraguay has generally maintained a history of religious toleration, even though, down till 1992, the government-approved religion was Roman Catholicism. Difficulty that has been experienced has usually been in the rural areas and at the instigation of the local priests and their fanatic followers. However, early in 1950, there was an official attempt to expel Watch Tower missionaries from the country.

A new law required all immigrants to register with the department of lands and to give proof of their occupation. However, when the missionaries tried to register, they were told that they could not do so because they were really in the country illegally and were therefore subject to arrest. It appears that false reports had been given to the authorities as to the nature of their work.

Some of the officials were sympathetic, but even their efforts and those of the American embassy seemed to come up

against a brick wall. In Latin America it is often not a matter of who you are but whom you know that brings results. In this case the brothers knew a person who was favorable toward them and who happened to work in the president's office. Through him, they invited the personal secretary of the president to dinner at the missionary home. The invitation was graciously accepted.

This afforded opportunity to discuss the real nature of the work of the missionaries and its benefits to the country. The problem of registration was also discussed, and the president's secretary was very much interested. As a result, on June 15, 1950, the first of the missionaries was able to register as an immigrant with the legal right to stay in the country to continue the work of Bible education.

A Rough Day in the Rurals

In those days a circuit overseer's work presented special challenges. These included traveling many hours and, in some cases, enduring violent opposition. Lloyd Gummesson, a graduate of Gilead School, began to serve full-time as a circuit overseer in 1952. After spending time with a congregation to the north of Yuty, he reported what occurred. Nearby territory had recently been worked, so plans were made to witness in a distant town. The group, six brothers and four sisters, left at 4:00 a.m. All of them were on foot except for a sister who had a one-year-old baby. At 11:00 a.m. they arrived in their territory, divided into two groups, and went to work.

'We had worked just one hour and at 12:00 noon were sitting in a grass-roofed house witnessing to an interested family,' said Brother Gummesson, 'when the sheriff and a 16-year-old soldier entered with guns pointed at us. He firmly told the family to give the literature back to us and then ordered

us to go with them to the police station. When we arrived the other publishers were already in the police station. I tried to reason with the sheriff but found that he spoke only Guarani, not Spanish. His eyes red with anger, he ordered all of us out of town and told us never to come back again.

'After we had walked about a mile, we sat down under a tree to eat lunch. All of a sudden the group got up and started running. I looked around, and there the sheriff and a soldier were coming on horseback with long whips. I thought it would be best if I stayed with the group and so started running also. As I jumped across a brook, I lost my sunglasses. When I stooped to pick them up, there was the sharp crack of a whip as it hit me across the back. Then the sheriff tried to run over me with his horse; but knowing something about horses, I swung my witnessing bag back and forth in front of the horse, and it would not come near me.

'In the meantime the sheriff had struck three of the other brothers repeatedly with the whip, and then he tried to run over a 70-year-old pioneer sister with his horse. Finally the two turned and went back to town, and we continued on our way. No one was seriously hurt, even though some had dark-red whip marks on their backs. But no one felt any pain. We arrived back at the house at 8:00 p.m.—after 16 hours of walking.'

In spite of such incidents in some smaller towns and villages, the work of Kingdom proclamation continued to prosper.

Following a Change in Government

The year 1954 proved to be a critical one in the political life of the country. The government of Don Federico Chávez was overthrown. On July 11, General Alfredo Stroessner was elected to the presidency. This introduced a period of

military rule that lasted for over 34 years. How did it affect the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses?

A four-day district convention was arranged for November 25-28 of that year. Paraguay was under martial law, and so a police permit was required if we were to hold a meeting of any kind. Would this present a problem? The brothers had already arranged to rent an auditorium. But when they went to obtain a police permit for the assembly, they were told that they could not hold the convention. Why not? An officer admitted that the priests were putting pressure on them. After many visits and much reasoning by the brothers, they were finally told that although they would not have a permit, the police might look the other way during the convention time. Discreetly, the brothers refrained from advertising the convention with handbills or in the newspapers. All invitations given were by word of mouth. The convention went off without a hitch.

Religious Opposition Continues

The Catholic clergy showed no letup in their efforts to stop Jehovah's Witnesses. Toward the end of 1955, arrangements were made for a small circuit assembly to be held in Piribebuy, 43 miles east of the capital. After dark on the first evening of the assembly, the parish priest led a mob armed with sticks and machetes to break up the meeting. A local schoolteacher intervened, and the mob withdrew to the street. There they spent the evening shouting and throwing rocks and firecrackers.

Religious opposition was again felt on March 1, 1957, in the town of Itá, southeast of the capital. Well in advance of this date, the brothers had made legal arrangements to hold their circuit assembly in this town. Legal permission to hold the assembly had been obtained both from the Itá city au-

thorities and from the police in the capital. However, as the brothers began arriving in Itá for the assembly, they could see that something was wrong. The city looked like a ghost town. Streets were deserted; windows and doors were closed and shuttered. Why?

The parish priest had vowed that this assembly would not be held and had gone to great lengths to fulfill his vow. He had even arranged for an airplane to scatter thousands of leaflets over the countryside. These contained this message: "Friday, March 1, 1957, at 5:30 p.m. in front of the church there will be a great concentration of all Catholic Christians from the city and districts. . . . At 6:30, an overwhelming manifestation of Catholics in repudiation of 'Jehovah's (false) Witnesses.' The Protestant heretics have no right to have any assembly whatever in Itá."

When the brothers were informed of priest Ayala's plans, it was thought best to move the assembly from the relatively open facilities that had been rented to the home of one of the brothers. The home would provide better protection in case of attack.

You can picture the scene. In the home of the brother, some 60 peace-loving Christians had gathered to consider God's Word. Two blocks away a crowd of more than a thousand, swelling in number by the minute, listened to the priest's tirade and his incitement to violence.

Not all in the crowd were in accord with the priest's actions. Solano Gamarra, a second lieutenant of the Paraguayan Air Force, tried to calm down the priest. He also spoke to the priest's adjutants, but to no avail. So furious was one of Ayala's fellow priests that he struck the lieutenant a blow and gashed his lip. With this, the crowd like wolves turned on the lieutenant, beating him and inflicting gaping wounds on his



*Werner Appenzeller and his wife, Alice,
missionaries in Paraguay for 40 years*

scalp. The mobsters ripped off his shirt and hoisted it on a pole to burn it. Gamarra fled for his life.

Having a taste for blood, the mob now turned toward the assembly, shouting: "Down with Jehovah!" "May Jehovah die!" As they approached the home where the assembly was being held, the light police protection melted away. The brothers barricaded the door of the house from the inside. Some of the mob tried to get into the rear patio through a neighbor's property, but the neighbor stood his ground and would not let them pass. He had not forgotten that when he was ill, the Witness whose home was now under attack had been very kind to him. Meanwhile, the brothers, with trust in Jehovah, carried on with their meeting as best they could. For safety, they all stayed in the house overnight. The next day, notification from police headquarters in Asunción canceled the permit for the assembly in order to safeguard the Witnesses and because the local police were unable to cope with the mob. A bus was chartered, and the happy, singing

delegates left for the branch-missionary home in Asunción to complete their assembly. They had met a test of faith and were the stronger for it.

Legal Recognition

Following the mob action in Itá, the branch office, in imitation of the course taken by the apostle Paul, took steps to 'legally establish the good news' in Paraguay. (Phil. 1:7; Acts 16:35-39) Good results came from this. After all the local legal requirements had been met, on October 14, 1957, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was given recognition as a legal person, authorized to represent Jehovah's Witnesses in this land. Notification of this was published as a presidential decree in the newspapers. This has proved to be very useful when purchasing needed property, and it has made possible the obtaining of permanent residency for missionaries.

Their First Motion Picture

From 1954 through 1961, the use of motion pictures accomplished much good in acquainting the public with Jehovah's organization. Arrangements were made to show the Society's films throughout much of the eastern part of the country. During the five years in which a count was taken, over 70,000 persons were on hand for the showings.

It proved to be quite a venture to transport a generator along with all the other equipment needed to show a film in a rural area. Usually an empty soccer field was chosen as the site. Equipment was set up before dark. Then an announcement was made over the loudspeaker to invite the public. Sometimes vandals threw stones. The size of the audiences varied. In General Artigas, where there was a congregation of fewer than 20 publishers who met five miles from town, some 1,300 people saw the film one night! It was not unusual to hear people laugh with glee when the scene changed

during the first moments of the film. After all, in rural areas it was often the first time they were seeing a motion picture.

The films gave the local Witnesses and the public a better idea of the magnitude of the work being done by Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide.

Missionaries Gave Freely of Themselves

As the publishers grew in number, the missionaries made a concerted effort to help them progress to maturity. The good results were manifest when the missionaries had the privilege of attending the New World Society Assembly in New York City in 1953. While they were away, it was necessary for local brothers to care for the responsibilities of oversight in the Asunción Congregation. New peaks in field service activities were reached. The local brothers did so well that when the missionaries returned, the local brothers were asked to continue to care for the assignments. This freed the missionaries to serve in other places.

There was much for them to do. After Werner Appenzeller had been in the country for about four months and was able to speak at least some Spanish, he was assigned to care for the circuit around Encarnación. Most of the roads were not yet paved. Travel was usually by foot or on horseback. There were just 100 publishers in the entire circuit, but encouragement and training would contribute to their spiritual progress. A few years later, Ladislao Golasik, who was the son of Robert Golasik and was from this area, was assigned to circuit work.

By the end of 1961, missionaries trained at Gilead School had been active in Paraguay for 15 years. There were then 411 Witnesses in the country, organized into 22 congregations. Upwards of 594,000 hours had been devoted to preaching the good news in this land. At that time the missionar-



*Proud of their Kingdom Hall (in Asunción)
—the first one built and owned by the Witnesses in Paraguay*

ies were serving out of five missionary homes. These were located in Asunción, Encarnación, Villarrica, Coronel Oviedo, and Pedro Juan Caballero. From these population centers, the missionaries also traveled out to preach in the surrounding area. Down till 1961, 50 missionaries had shared in the work in Paraguay. Because of illness or for other reasons, 29 had found it necessary to return to their native lands. But all of them had contributed in various ways to the advancing of Kingdom interests in Paraguay. In December 1961, Elmer and Mary Pysh, graduates of the first ten-month course of Gilead, arrived in Paraguay.

Building Their Own Meeting Places

At about this time, the brothers in Asunción built and dedicated a Kingdom Hall, the first one in Paraguay to be owned by them. It was a fine building of brick and cement, with room to seat over 200 persons. What a witness it was

to the community, as men, women, and children shared together in digging, mixing concrete, polishing bricks, painting, and cleaning up! It was evident to observers that these were diligent workers.

A small group of Witnesses, not yet a congregation, were having so many come to their meetings in Vacay, a rural area in the south of the country, that they decided they too needed a Kingdom Hall. But they had no money. What could they do? They made an agreement with a logging operator by which they, as a group, would clear some land in exchange for building materials and some money. When the hall was finished, four interested families who lived far away sold their farms and moved closer to the Kingdom Hall so that they would not miss the meetings.

Later on, facilities for assemblies and conventions were also constructed. At various times the brothers had used the Club Martín Pescador, also accommodations at the National University and at the American School. Then early in the 1970's, land was donated on which they could build their own Convention Center, and this took shape gradually over a period of years.

Providing Suitable Branch Facilities

With increased activity and the resulting blessing from Jehovah, it was also necessary to provide more-adequate branch facilities. Various houses had been rented over the years for the purpose. But in 1962, Nathan Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society, gave direction to purchase property in one of the nicer parts of the city, with a view to building a branch-missionary home that would also include a Kingdom Hall. The property was located on one of the main avenues of the capital, two blocks from the main sports stadium in Paraguay. After plans had been drawn up and approvals had been received from the city, construction began



Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses

in January 1965, and within ten months the project was completed. Early in 1966 it was a delight to the brothers that, during one of his zone visits, Brother Knorr was with them for the dedication of the new facilities.

Because of the location of the building, many thousands of people in Asunción were daily made aware of the presence

of Jehovah's Witnesses in their midst. And as they passed on their way to sports events, thousands more were reminded that Jehovah has his Witnesses in Paraguay.

New Administrative Arrangement

As was true in branch offices of the Society around the globe, on February 1, 1976, a Branch Committee began to function, replacing the arrangement of having an individual branch overseer. During the preceding 30 years, Albert Lang, William Schillinger, Max Lloyd, Lloyd Gummesson, Harry Kays, and Elmer Pysh had served for varying lengths of time as branch overseers. All had made fine contributions to the Kingdom work. Now a new arrangement was going into effect in which a committee of mature men would share in providing oversight for the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the country.

Elmer Pysh was named coordinator of the Branch Committee, and Charles Miller and Isaac Gavilán were assigned as the other members. Brothers Pysh and Miller were both Gilead graduates. Brother Gavilán, a Paraguayan, had been in full-time service in Paraguay for 13 years.

Another Wave of Official Opposition

As is true around the world, Jehovah's Witnesses are neutral as to political matters. They take to heart Jesus' statement to his followers: "You are no part of the world." (John 15:19) Having in mind the Bible's counsel, "Guard yourselves from idols," they also refrain from sharing in nationalistic ceremonies that they view as being idolatrous. (1 John 5:21) Government officials, whose lives are deeply involved in the political system and who view nationalism as a means for uniting their people, may at first find the position of Jehovah's Witnesses difficult to grasp. They know that other religious groups, even the clergy, do not hesitate to participate in pol-

Paraguay

Witnessing to a
sugarcane harvester
in Villarrica



itics and in nationalistic ceremonies. The clergy frequently use this situation to sow seeds of suspicion among government officials regarding Jehovah's Witnesses.

In a letter dated October 31, 1974, the then general director of religion, Dr. Manfredo Ramirez Russo, requested information about the beliefs and organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. On February 25, 1976, a government decree was issued that required "the daily flag-raising ceremony and singing of the National Anthem" in "all teaching institutions." In sensation-style journalism, the September 3-17 edition of the religious publication *El Sendero* (The Pathway) carried a defamatory full-page article entitled "Jehovah's Witnesses." *Patria*, the official newspaper of the government political party, followed up with a similarly defamatory article entitled "Fanaticism," on March 14, 1977.

In the meantime, representatives from the central offices of Jehovah's Witnesses were summoned for an interview with the general director of religion. A summary of the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses was made following that meeting. It

focused specifically on their position with relation to the flag, the national anthem, and military service. A few days later, a police official, Obdulio Argüello Britez, came to the Society's office in Asunción and requested information about the assembly that Jehovah's Witnesses had held from January 6 to 9. Shortly thereafter, the state attorney general, Dr. Clotilde Jiménez Benítez, interviewed representatives of the Society on the same subjects that had been considered previously in the Office of Administration of Religion.

Following this chain of events, in 1978, children of Jehovah's Witnesses who abstained from singing the national anthem began to be expelled from school, with no possibility of enrollment in another school. But that was not the end of it.

Proscription—What It Meant

On January 3, 1979, the "bomb" finally exploded. A decree was published that canceled the legal status of the Watch Tower Society, which represented Jehovah's Witnesses.

Newspaper headlines announcing the decree shook Witnesses and non-Witnesses alike. Practically all the news media took an interest in the case. Some favored the action; others condemned it. The newspaper *ABC* declared that the decree was "a violation of a fundamental human right, consecrated by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Immediately upon being informed of the ban, the Branch Committee, without yet knowing the limits of the ban, organized things so that the branch work could be cared for in other places. "This has never been contemplated as religious persecution," declared Dr. Raul Peña, the minister of education and religion. Nevertheless, Jehovah's Witnesses were obliged to hold their meetings in small groups in private

homes. Their preaching activity was restricted, although the zeal and courage of the majority of the brothers were not affected. To benefit from Christian assemblies, for a time they had to arrange to attend such assemblies in other countries.

How had this series of events begun? Had Dr. Manfredo Ramirez Russo acted solely in a governmental capacity? Interestingly, on August 25, 1981, *Ultima Hora*, a newspaper in Asunción, featured a picture of Manfredo Ramirez Russo and "Monsignor" José Mees cordially standing face-to-face. Under the picture appeared the caption: "The honorary medal of 'Saint Gregory the Great' was conferred upon Manfredo Ramirez Russo, director of Religion in the Ministry of Education, by the Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness, Monsignor José Mees, in recognition of services performed to the Catholic Church."

After the ban was imposed, there were arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses in many places. They were taken into custody when found holding small meetings in private homes, when going to homes to share the Bible's message of hope with others, and when conducting Bible studies with interested people in their homes.

Between October 8 and 11, 1981, nine brothers in Encarnación were imprisoned. When Antonio Pereira, a local elder who had not been arrested, asked to speak with the chief of police, Julio Antonio Martínez, in order to ascertain the well-being of the brothers in jail, the police chief ordered his arrest and had him confined in a maximum-security cell. In the meantime, Joseph Zillner, from a neighboring congregation, went to the house of the mother of the first of the imprisoned brothers to see what was happening. Someone must have informed the police, and within ten minutes he was under police escort en route to the Encarnación jail!

Fanning the Flames of Persecution

A few years after the ban was imposed, the arrests ceased. Little by little the brothers began to use their Kingdom Halls and to hold small assemblies. However, all of this was abruptly interrupted in 1984 when a local newspaper announced that four students who were Jehovah's Witnesses had been expelled from the Vocational Technical School in Asunción because they would not sing the national anthem. That ignited the flames of an even greater campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses. In its wake, almost all the school-age children of Jehovah's Witnesses were expelled. Many of these children would never be able to return to school.

That year, from May 2 to 5, the newspaper *Hoy* (Today) published a series of defamatory articles written by Antonio Colón, a Catholic priest. Later that year, a new minister of education and religion was sworn in, but he continued the policies of his predecessor. After he made a strongly nationalistic declaration, most of the children of Jehovah's Witnesses were refused enrollment in school for the coming year. In behalf of a group of ten of the students, six of whom had been expelled and four of whom had been refused enrollment, an appeal was presented to the courts for the right of Jehovah's Witnesses to have their children educated in the school system without having to abandon their faith or the dictates of their conscience. The court's ruling was in favor of the Witnesses. But the Ministry of Education and Religion appealed the case to the Supreme Court.

All during 1985 this issue continued in the limelight. Some columnists defended the position of Jehovah's Witnesses, while those in official circles continued to attack them. On July 23, 1985, while the controversy was yet in full swing, a letter from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses was sent to the president of Paraguay.

Having a favorable lower-court ruling in the case of the school-age children, the branch office encouraged the congregations to begin to use their Kingdom Halls more openly once again. This would oblige the authorities to take a more definite position—either against us or conceding greater liberty.

On March 21, 1986, the coordinator of the Branch Committee was summoned to police headquarters. "You are using your meeting places again and you are not permitted to do so," was the warning given. Brother Gavilán replied: "Permit me to remind you that the decree that canceled our legal recognition was challenged as to its constitutionality. That process is under consideration by the Supreme Court at this moment; the Court has not yet issued a decision. Inasmuch as an action of unconstitutionality exercises a suspensive effect on that decree, from a legal standpoint we have a right to exercise our activities as long as the final Court decision is yet forthcoming." "I'm not a lawyer," answered the officer, "so I can't argue that. In that case bring me a list of your meeting places and we'll see what happens." That put an end to the interview. The requested information was presented, along with the corresponding legal argument. The Kingdom Halls were not closed again.

However, on February 26, 1987, the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Dr. Luis María Argaña ruled against Jehovah's Witnesses in the case of the schoolchildren. Among many of the intelligentsia, this was viewed as a political decision, and not a few condemned it. What effect did all of this have on the work of Jehovah's Witnesses?

Continuing to Preach the Good News

The work of Kingdom proclamation did not stop during those difficult years. In January 1984, the branch office initiated a campaign to work isolated territory by means of temporary special pioneers. Thirty shared in the program during the first year. Seventy-five different towns were visited. In 14,

the local authorities would not permit the brothers to preach. But in other places, when the value of this spiritual work was explained to the authorities, they offered protection to our brothers and, in some cases, a place to sleep in the police station itself!

As a result of this activity, many interested people were located. A woman living about 125 miles from Asunción, after having received from the pioneers the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, wrote to the branch office to ask for further help. When a Witness couple arrived in answer to her request, the woman raised her eyes toward heaven and, with tears in her eyes, thanked Jehovah. In spite of opposition from relatives, she became a faithful servant of Jehovah, witnessing to neighbors and acquaintances.

New groups of publishers and new congregations were organized in these previously isolated territories. The temporary special pioneer campaign was made an annual arrangement and continues until now, with marvelous results.

Pressure Lets Up

In official circles Jehovah's Witnesses and their activities were becoming better known. Efforts to help officials get a clearer understanding of the work of Jehovah's Witnesses continued until verbal approval was finally given for the holding of a public assembly on March 21 and 22, 1987, in Jehovah's Witnesses' own Convention Center.

What a joyful day for the brothers! With tears in their eyes, brothers and sisters hugged one another. After nine years of pressure, tension, uncertainty, and outright persecution, this was the first time that they had been able to be together to worship freely in Paraguay. In attendance were delegates from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay who had been invited for this special occasion. That was the coup de grace to the influence of the ban.



▲ *Fernando de la Mora (Norte)*
Kingdom Hall



◀ *Vista Alegre (Norte), Asunción,*
Kingdom Hall

Legal Recognition Again

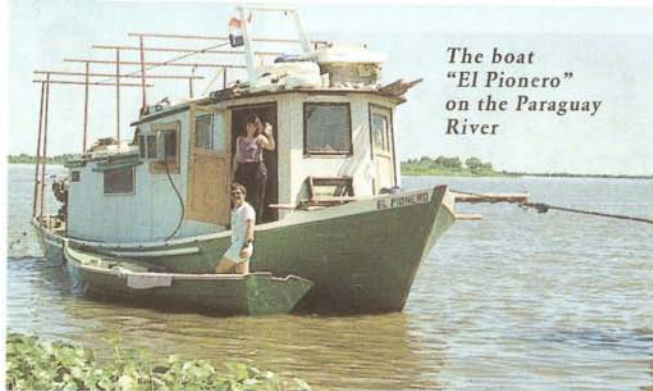
Paraguay was facing times of change. Political tension was building up. Finally, on the night of February 2, 1989, the sound of heavy arms was heard in Asunción. Revolution had broken out! The military government of Alfredo Stroessner came to an end the next day.

Efforts to obtain legal recognition were reinitiated at once. Finally, the application was approved on August 8, 1991. What a happy day for Jehovah's people in Paraguay!

On June 20, 1992, a new constitution went into force. Important clauses were included that dealt with human rights, such as the freedom to congregate, the freedom of



Zealous workers from many lands have come to Paraguay to share in giving a witness: (1) Canada, (2) Austria, (3) France, (4) Brazil, (5) Korea, (6) U.S.A., (7) Belgium, (8) Japan, (9) Germany



The boat
"El Pionero"
on the Paraguay
River

conscientious objection, the freedom of religion and ideology, and the elimination of a State religion. These and other advancements provided welcome relief.

On With the Work!

There was still much work to be done in preaching the good news in Paraguay. In 1979, when the ban was imposed, there were 1,541 Kingdom proclaimers in Paraguay. In the year that legal recognition was restored, 3,760 reported. Now there are upwards of 6,200. But the ratio of publishers to population is still 1 to 817. What more can be done to reach the people?

Each year, special pioneers are regularly sent to witness in towns where no congregations are located. But 49 percent of the population lives in rural areas. In 1987 the branch equipped a truck with basic commodities necessary to make it suitable as a mobile home for special pioneers. For ten years now, it has been used to reach the rural territories not covered by congregations or by temporary special pioneers. In this way the waters of life are being spread throughout vast areas of the country.

Special effort has also been made to witness to people who live along the rivers. Often, their only physical contact with the rest of the world is by boat. So by 1992 the Soci-

ety had built a boat with room for a crew of four. They began a systematic campaign to look for sheeplike people along the banks of the rivers. Appropriately the boat is named *The Pioneer*.

"Traversing the Paraguay River," writes the brother in charge of the group, "we arrived at Puerto Fonciere, 300 miles from Asunción, and began preaching from house to house. In the course of a conversation with an elderly woman, we mentioned that God had said he would destroy all wickedness, and as Jehovah's Witnesses, we were informing the people that God would do this through his Kingdom. Interrupting the conversation, the woman turned to her granddaughter and told her to call her grandfather and tell him that 'his people' had arrived. Shortly the grandfather, a man in his 70's, came. He was perspiring, since he had been working on his farm. He greeted us warmly, and with tear-filled eyes, he thanked God that we had finally arrived. He said that he had been waiting for our visit for some time. Somewhat puzzled, we asked for an explanation. He replied that a certain military captain from the island Peña Hermosa had given him a Bible and the book *'Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie.'* The captain had marked several Bible texts, such as Psalm 37:10, 11 and Psalm 83:18, and had told him that some day Jehovah's Witnesses would arrive at his home to tell him more of Jehovah's purposes. A Bible study was started immediately."

To date the boat has covered, at least twice, all the territory along the banks of the Paraguay River from the Bolivian border on the north to the Argentine border on the south, a total distance of some 785 miles.

Zealous Workers Sharing in the Harvest

When Jesus instructed his first-century disciples, he urged them: "Beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matt. 9:38) Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses

have taken that to heart, and the Master has indeed sent many zealous workers into the field to share in the spiritual harvest in Paraguay.

From 1945 down to the present, 191 missionaries have served in Paraguay. Of these, 60 have been in the country for ten years or more (including 22 who serve as missionaries but are not Gilead graduates), and at present 84 missionaries serve here. In the areas where they have concentrated their activity throughout the eastern part of Paraguay, there are now 61 progressive congregations.

In order to help give a witness in this land where the ratio of population to Witnesses is still 817 to 1, neighboring branches have assigned some special pioneers to serve here. Other Witnesses too have moved to Paraguay from many lands. They have come from such places as Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States, and Uruguay. They have used their resources and abilities in many ways to advance the work of Kingdom proclamation. Some have served in urban territory; others are carrying on their ministry in towns and villages where living conditions are quite primitive. The majority of them are pioneers. Some have helped with the construction of Kingdom Halls and branch facilities.

Over the years, Paraguay has accepted immigrants of diverse national origins. German, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Japanese, and Korean immigrants have become established in various parts of the country. These too are receiving a witness from missionaries and other Witnesses who have moved to Paraguay.

But what about the people who speak Guarani? These make up 90 percent of the population. According to a recent survey, 37 percent of Paraguayans speak *only* Guarani. Local

Witnesses are doing most of the work among these people, and they are happy to have brochures in Guarani to help them accomplish it.

Among the local Witnesses are some who have spent many years in the full-time ministry. During her 36 years as a special pioneer, Edulfina de Yinde has helped 78 persons to the point of dedication and baptism. She and her husband rejoice that there are five congregations flourishing where they have served. María Chavez has also helped many during her 39 years of service as a special pioneer.

Thousands more who are not pioneers are still zealous in serving Jehovah. Many of them walk long distances both to attend meetings and to give a thorough witness in their rural territory. They frequently leave home for their territory before daybreak, often carrying with them a goodly portion of "Paraguayan soup" (a dry food) or perhaps a supply of tortillas and yucca root. By about seven o'clock, they are ready to begin witnessing, and they continue until nearly sunset. When they arrive home, they are tired but happy to have given of themselves in telling others about Jehovah and his marvelous purpose.

Thirsting Ones "Take Life's Water Free"

As foretold in the Scriptures, the invitation is being extended to anyone that wishes to "take life's water free." (Rev. 22:17) Thousands who have accepted that invitation are found in Paraguay.

Among them is Herenia. She was raised a Roman Catholic and was a fervent believer in the Church's traditions and in religious superstitions. She had great fear of the dead and of hell-fire. She believed in omens and was filled with dread when she saw or heard what she construed to be an evil omen. For 20 years she lived in such fear. Then in 1985 she began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. As the study progressed,

the waters of truth brought great refreshment to her and stimulated within her the desire to live forever in the Paradise foretold in God's Word.

In 1996 a woman named Isabel, in the town of Carapeguá, also tasted life's water. However, what she saw in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* did not agree with her beliefs, so she asked the Witnesses not to call again. But she read the book on her own, talked to her neighbors about it, and when she did see a Witness again, there were people in four households who were eager to learn more. Most of them cooled off under pressure from the Pentecostal preacher, but a good witness was given, and the first woman as well as one neighbor has continued to benefit from life-giving truths.

When the waters of truth were first offered to Dionisio and Ana, they, like many other people, were living together without being married, and they had been for 20 years. Dionisio and his eldest daughter began to study with Jehovah's Witnesses in 1986; Ana and the other two daughters opposed. She begged the Witness to quit talking with Dionisio, threatened to kill the Witness, said she would call the police, and consulted with a Catholic nun. Then Ana appealed to the juvenile court on the basis that the Bible study would endanger her eldest daughter. After learning that Dionisio was, in fact, providing properly for his household, the judge recommended that Ana investigate the Bible with Dionisio. Ana protested that her friend the nun had warned her that the Witnesses do immoral things at their meetings. The judge, a woman, reassured her and then said: "We Catholics say we know the Bible, but actually we know nothing. Jehovah's Witnesses study the Bible. I suggest that you investigate the Bible also." The judge then recommended that Ana get married to Dionisio.

Taken aback, Ana visited the nun again and requested her to study the Bible with them. The nun replied that it was



Paraguay
Bethel Home
and branch
office, near
Asunción,
and those who
serve there





Branch
Committee
(from top
to bottom):
Charles
Miller,
Wilhelm
Kasten,
Isaac
Gavilán

not necessary. Furthermore, she urged Ana not to marry Dionisio, though in the past, when Dionisio would hear nothing of it, the nun had frequently told Ana that she ought to marry him. Not long after this, Ana's father became gravely ill. Local Witnesses provided much help to the family. That proved to be the turning point for Ana. She began to study, and she married Dionisio. Now, nearly ten years later, Dionisio is an elder, and his entire family is zealously serving Jehovah.

Loving persistence has reached the hearts of many in Paraguay. In the San Lorenzo area, for example, there was just one congregation back in 1982. Despite the ban, many of the publishers shared in the pioneer service; as a result, the congregation territory, which included nearby cities, began to be worked regularly. Jehovah blessed their zeal. Now there are nine congregations in that area. Werner Appenzeller and his wife, Alice, feel that the growth they saw while serving in that area was their greatest joy during 40 years of service in Paraguay.

Such growth continues, not just in one area, but throughout the country. In 1996, fine new branch facilities were dedicated at a location about six miles from Asunción. There are Kingdom Halls in many parts of the country, and meetings for Bible instruction are held in them regularly. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to call on people at their homes and talk to them on the streets. They are zealously extending to people of all sorts the invitation to "take life's water free."



A letter from the GOVERNING BODY

IT IS good for all of God's people to reflect upon developments of the past year as we await what lies ahead. And what a magnificent prospect Jehovah has set before us! For the little flock, those anointed with the spirit of God, there is the privilege of serving as kings and priests in the heavens with Jesus Christ. (Rev. 20:6) For the other sheep, who now number well over five million, there is eternal life in an earthly paradise, a paradise in which everyone will know and love Jehovah and reflect his qualities in dealing with fellow humans. (Isa. 11:9; 1 John 4:7, 8; Rev. 21:4) Why has Jehovah done this? Because of his love and as an expression of great undeserved kindness toward those who exercise faith in the ransom sacrifice that he provided by means of his own Son, Jesus Christ.—John 3:16.

No wonder the apostle Paul said that "the sufferings of the present season do not amount to anything in comparison with" what God had set before him. And he aptly described the "eager expectation" that would be felt by those watching for clear evidence that the heavenly kings had gone into action to cleanse the earth, to be followed by the raising up of the dead and the bringing of obedient mankind to perfection. This will make it possible for humans to enjoy "the glorious freedom of the children of God." —Rom. 8:18-21.

Already the heavenly Kingdom is in operation. (Rev. 11:15-17) We have the privilege of serving its interests here on earth. Our assignment is to tell other people about the good news of the Kingdom. (Matt. 24:14) What sort of circumstances have our brothers had to face while doing this during the past year? Exactly the sort that the Scriptures foretold for the last days of the present wicked system of things.—Luke 21:10, 11; 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

A wave of violence engulfed Albania for months. Heavily armed terrorist bands robbed, destroyed property, raped, and murdered. But our brothers did not refrain from preaching the good news. Warfare swept across large sections of Africa and tore at the heart of parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia. Although maintaining strict Christian neutrality, a number of our brothers perished as a result of the violence, as well as from diseases that followed the fighting. Many had to leave all their possessions and flee into the bush or the jungle, even having to cross national borders to seek refuge. Catastrophic floods hit areas of Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, and the United States. An earthquake destroyed two Kingdom Halls in Venezuela. Hot ashes, mud, and boulders spewing from a volcano forced over half of the inhabitants of Montserrat to leave that island. In many places people are faced with severe economic problems, and street crime makes it dangerous for anyone to wear jewelry, even a watch.

In the midst of all the above, and despite the general apathy in the Western world, Jehovah's Witnesses keep on preaching. How do they cope? They are sustained by Jehovah's love, by the intense love of the international brotherhood, and by a keen awareness that the events of our day all point unmistakably to the near end of the old system.—Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Pet. 4:7, 8.

Although worsening conditions make life hard, our brothers continue courageously to gather for congregation meetings and assemblies. Our yeartext for the past year was, "Teach me to do your will." (Ps. 143:10) Much of that teaching is done at

the meetings, and Jehovah fed us well through the faithful slave class during the year. When the government in Albania declared a state of emergency, the brothers shifted meetings to daylight hours and met in book study groups. Attendance ran two to three times the number of publishers. In the face of anarchy, looting, and killing, our brothers met regularly in Sierra Leone. When they were forced to flee to the jungle in Sri Lanka or to live in a refugee camp, as in Côte d'Ivoire, arrangements were made so that they would not miss out on assembly programs.

With turmoil becoming more widespread, this is no time to be lax about attending our meetings or to adopt the view that getting to the Kingdom Hall once a week is enough. The Scriptures urge us 'not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together, but to encourage one another, *and all the more so as we behold the day drawing near.*' (Heb. 10:24, 25) Jehovah knows what we need.

This past year a new peak of 375,923 were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. What cause for rejoicing! Jesus' words as recorded at John 4:35 still apply: "Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting." Hence, we keep pressing ahead in giving a witness. Whether there are many or few, the lives of those who turn to Jehovah are precious. (Luke 15:7) Indeed, we thank Jehovah that Memorial attendance increased by more than one million this past year!

Our yeartext for 1998 reminds us of the need to help further millions answer the call: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." (Rom. 10:13) It is our earnest prayer that all in the organization individually share in giving a witness during this new service year, thus showing our depth of appreciation for all that Jehovah has done for his people.

With warm Christian love to our fellow servants worldwide,

Your brothers,

Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses

CHIEF OFFICE AND OFFICIAL ADDRESS OF
 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania
 Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.
 International Bible Students Association
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